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GOD'S PLAN

GOD'S PLAN

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MICHAEL FURSE, D.D.

BISHOP OF ST ALBANS

FORMERLY BISHOP OF PRETORIA

HONORARY FELLOW, AND SOMETIME FELLOW

DEAN AND CHAPLAIN, OF TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD

THE
STUDENT
CHRISTIAN
MOVEMENT
PRESS

STUDENT CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT PRESS

32 RUSSELL SQUARE, LONDON, W.C.1

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F 983

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First published November 1929

Second Edition, March 1930

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*Made and Printed in Great Britain
by Turnbull & Spears, Edinburgh*

TO MY WIFE

PREFACE

IN writing this book I have been especially helped by two of my chaplains, Canon Mayhew and the Reverend J. L. Barkway. They kindly read it when it was in typescript, and the criticisms and suggestions which they made were most valuable. Canon Mayhew also generously undertook the laborious (and, as I think, irritating) task of revising the proofs for press. I am indeed grateful.

There is another friend to whom I owe a deep debt of gratitude—a debt which I love to acknowledge though I can never hope to repay. That friend is Bishop Charles Gore. Humanly speaking most of what is real to me in *God's Plan* is due to him and to his teaching. For the last fifty years he has been to me, as to hundreds of others all over the world, not only the best of friends, the soundest of teachers, and the wisest of leaders, but a glorious example of how a man can live his life according to God's plan as revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Feast of St Bartholomew

1929

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All that was in His plan
Who once: 'Let us make man,'
And: 'Let us make *this* man,'
Said, as He formèd thee,
All that Love pictured thee
This, I pray, thou may'st be.

By the Author of
'The House of my Pilgrimage'

GOD'S PLAN

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

IN 1928 I spent a week-end in the Diocesan House at St Albans with some thirty scout-masters from Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. We met to discuss the question of how the religious side of the Scout Movement could be made more effective. Our discussions, which were frank and outspoken, showed clearly that there was a very general agreement on certain points.

First, the importance of taking seriously the first Scout Promise—"our duty to God"—as the basis on which the whole Scout Movement was definitely founded, and on which, if it was to be of lasting value, it must be carried on.

Secondly, the consequent necessity for Christian scout-masters to have such a clear knowledge of the fundamentals of their religion as to qualify them for teaching it to the boys under their care.

Thirdly, that whereas every other branch of Scouting was dealt with scientifically and systematically at Training Weeks, with a view to equipping scout-masters for their work, this subject was in practice omitted: consequently every scout-master was left to himself to deal with it as best he could.

Fourthly, that there was a real need for some textbook on the subject which scout-masters could study for themselves, and as a basis perhaps for lectures at Training Weeks.

Eventually it was suggested that I should write such a book on the general lines of the talks given at this Week-end. It was a suggestion that I could not lightly disregard, so I thought it over carefully, and I came to the conclusion that it was worth trying to carry out.

I came to this conclusion mainly for two reasons. First, because I am a whole-hearted believer in both the Scout Movement and in its sister Movement the Girl Guides. I believe that both of these Movements are based on sound psychological and educational principles, and that they are capable of doing great things—as indeed they have already done—for the rising generation of boys and girls of every section of the community, if only they are guided aright and are true to their own principles. I take my hat off to that gallant and really self-sacrificing band of men and women who all over the world to-day are giving themselves to the work of Scouting and Guiding: I would do anything in my power to help and encourage them in their splendid work. Secondly, because I am convinced that the most important part of that work lies in the practical application to everyday life of that first Promise “to do our duty to God.” If I could help any scout-master or guider in any way more fully to realize the practical implications of this promise and to pass them on to their lads and girls, I should feel that I had done

some service to these two great Movements, and through them to the future of our country and the world.

The object of Scouting and Guiding is, frankly, the production of the highest character among boys and girls. In making "the doing of his duty to God" the scout's first promise, those responsible for the Movement definitely acknowledge that the most important factor in character-building is Religion. As sensible men and women they believe that there is the closest possible connection between Creed and Character. They assume that "as a man thinketh (or believeth) in his heart, so is he"; or, in other words, that ideas rule the world, and that creed makes character.

If, as I am convinced, they are right in this belief, then the most important thing in the world for anyone is to get hold of the right ideas as to the nature and character of God and of man's duty to Him. But to know what you ought to do is one thing and to do it is quite another.

The upshot, then, of our week-end Conference was a general agreement that the three most important questions for scout-masters and guiders to face with a view to helping their boys and girls to carry out their first promise as scouts and guides were: What is God like? What is my duty to Him? and, How can I do it?

But these are, as a fact, just the very questions with which everyone, young or old, who is attempting to look at life seriously is faced. These are the questions to which boys and girls, men and women, are seeking answers, in as I believe

far greater numbers than would appear to be the case.

During the last few years I have had some experience of discussing these questions with undergraduates at our universities and with various groups of men and women, husbands and wives of the educated classes, teachers in all sorts of schools, and social workers, public schoolboys and girls, as well as working lads and working girls, whom I have got together in Conference in our Diocesan House or elsewhere for two or three days, or a week-end. This experience has convinced me that, though there is a genuine interest among all sorts of people of all ages, there is a terrible amount of ignorance as to what the Christian faith really is, and perhaps still more, very little idea even among many, who are prepared to accept it, as to how the whole thing hangs together. Again and again I have found that a man's ideas of our Lord have little or no connection with his ideas about God, that his ideas about the Church have no real connection with his ideas about our Lord; and that his ideas about prayer, sacrament, and worship, often of the haziest description, are entirely unrelated to his ordinary everyday life.

The consequence is that, though I started to write this book primarily with the idea of perhaps being able to help scout-masters and guiders in their own lives and in the big work which they are doing for the rising generation, in writing it I have, as a fact, had in mind the ordinary educated man and woman or boy and girl of whom I have been speaking; not least, perhaps, those who, like

scout-masters and guiders, find themselves in the position of trying to make religion real to the younger generation. I have tried in a short compass to give an outline conspectus of the Christian faith and life as a whole. I have tried to show how the different parts of this faith hang together. I have attempted to answer those big questions: What is God like? What is man meant by Him to be? What is our duty to Him? and How can we do it? I have tried to do so in ordinary language, avoiding as far as possible technical theological terms, or when they are used, explaining them in simple English.

Should the following pages achieve my object I hope they may serve both as an incentive as well as an introduction to the further study of the greatest of all sciences—the knowledge of God—and the most thrilling and most glorious of all adventures—that of trying to live all one's life according to God's plan, as made known by our Lord.

I confess I cherish another hope, and that is that some who read this book may come to realize that the Christian faith and life is a subject which demands, and is worth, the best study of which we are capable. If that comes about, then this elementary introduction to that study may help to get rid of the prevalent idea that the knowledge of the Christian faith is something which everyone naturally possesses by instinct. Who could deny that it would be unreasonable to expect anyone to teach any science or art of which he had not himself made a special study? But the curious thing

is that it seems to be generally taken for granted that anyone can teach the Christian religion, as I heard somebody once say, "standing on his head, with his left hand!" and that, too, without any special study, or indeed without necessarily himself believing in the faith that he is professing to teach. To anyone, of course, who has spent his life in this business such an idea is utterly ludicrous, and yet it is still extraordinarily prevalent. It still prevails in our national system of Elementary and Secondary Education; it still prevails in most of our public schools, though in our best secondary schools for girls wiser methods are being introduced. Anyone who desires to teach classics, science, history, or modern languages must show at least some qualifications for doing so, and some evidence of the special study of the subject, but in most if not in all our public schools to-day a university degree in classics or chemistry or history or any other subject is apparently considered a sufficient guarantee for the man being competent to teach "Divinity" based on the Bible, and purporting at least to do with the Christian religion; in some schools such men are even supposed to be qualified, if they happen to be house-masters, to give boys their special preparation for confirmation! Sometimes I have no sort of doubt that the teaching given is first-rate, for many who give it have made it their business to study the subject with great care and labour, and what is even more important, believe in the faith which they teach and on it base their own daily lives. But the fact remains that in spite of the great advances made

in recent years in the science of teaching, the idea is still largely prevalent that no special study is required to make a man or woman competent to teach the Christian faith. It is, I suppose, the relic of the old idea that the Englishman knows by instinct all about three things: politics, because he knows what *he wants*; art, because he knows what *he likes*; and religion, because he knows what *he believes*!

But there are signs here and there of better things. The Headmasters' Conference, held in January 1929, accepted a Report, presented to them by a committee of the Conference, dealing with the question of Religious Teaching in Public Schools. That Report closed with the following paragraph, which is significant, and a good augury for the future:

"The Committee recognize that the effect of any Divinity teaching must ultimately depend on the teacher. They do not wish to see this teaching limited to experts, and consider the two qualifications for a teacher to be, first, that he should profess and call himself a Christian; and, secondly, that he should be prepared to equip himself for his task by a reasonable course of study, such as is given by the Board of Education, the Biblical Vacation Term, and the Divinity Lectures Committee."

Further, the serious work in Christian adult education undertaken by the Church Tutorial Classes Association and by other organizations of a similar character, is full of hope. Some at least are waking up to the fact that part of the first

great commandment is that man shall love God with all his *mind*, and that therefore a Christian's education in the faith which he professes should not cease when he leaves school, but is something which should go on as long as he is alive ; and that those who teach Christianity should not only believe the faith which they profess to teach, but should have made some serious study of the subject.

CHAPTER II

I BELIEVE

WHAT is God like? What am I meant to be? What is my duty to Him? and, How can I do it?

Is it possible to answer these questions? We Christians believe it is. We believe that it was just in order to make the answers to these questions clear to the whole of mankind that the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ—Perfect God—took our nature upon Him and became Perfect Man. He came, we believe, to reveal or make known to us men what God is like, what man is meant by Him to be, and how we can fulfil God's purpose for us. As His message was for "all nations and kindreds and people and tongues," not just for one nation or people but for the whole human race, He gave that message in the one language which is common to the whole world—and there is only one, and that is, the language of a human life. That language, and that alone, is equally understood by Englishmen as by Germans or Italians, by Chinamen as by natives of India or Africa. And this fact is worth remembering by anyone who wants to understand what Christianity is or to teach it to anyone else. It reminds us at the outset of two other facts of tremendous importance: first, that

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Christianity is not merely a philosophy of life, nor merely a code of morals, but a life to be lived ; and, secondly, that just as it was first given to the world through the medium of a life lived, and has been passed on ever since from generation to generation by lives lived according to God's plan in Christ's way, so it can only be passed on to-day in the same way.

You cannot teach the Christian religion as you can teach history, geography, science, or mathematics. "Religion is caught, not taught." We catch it from others who believe in it themselves and are honestly trying to live their whole lives according to that faith. I say "honestly trying," because I believe that is all that our Lord asks of any of us. To me I think the most cheering words in the whole of the New Testament are, "He that shall endure unto the end the same shall be saved." That is the one ultimate condition our Lord Himself lays down for life here or hereafter : not success, but service, that we shall be good tryers and not give up trying, but go on and stick to it and see it through. It is just those people who do this from whom we "catch religion" ; we must be people like that if others are ever to catch religion from us, and it is possible, so don't let anyone be discouraged.

It is, then, from the study of Christ's life and teaching that we can get the true answers to these questions. From that life we can learn what God is like, what we are meant to be, what God's plan for the world really is, what He means His Church to be, and how we men can get that power and

spirit to enable us to live our lives according to God's plan. Our Lord, as He said Himself, is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." He came to show us the way, by revealing or making known to us the Truth about God, ourselves, and the world. But He did not merely set before us an ideal, but gives us—if we will learn to take it and make it our own—the power to reach out after it. And is not that exactly what we all want? Broadly speaking, all of us, consciously or unconsciously—mostly, perhaps, the latter—know something anyway of the Christian ideal: we are perfectly conscious of the fact that we ought to keep our tempers, be honest, self-controlled, and show courage, both physical and moral, and many other things as well; but the trouble is, how to do it! Can religion really help us here? Is there anything in prayer, sacraments, worship? Are they any practical good in the way of helping us to keep our tempers better, do our work with greater efficiency, and be better friends, citizens, fathers, mothers, sons or daughters?

If so, how do they work? and how can we learn to make this practical use of them? Those are the sort of questions young and old are asking to-day, and they want answers to them. Can we give those answers? Yes, we can, but never from the outside as it were. We must come right in and study and work both at the science and the art of making and keeping contact with those unseen spiritual forces which our Lord made use of Himself, and which He has made known to us.

That is why you cannot teach anyone else the

Christian faith and life unless you are honestly trying to live it yourself. You can theorize about it, you can exhort others to be good (that is comparatively easy), you can hold up before them in words a high ideal, but you will never "deliver the goods," you will never "get it across to them," you will never really persuade them there is anything in it, unless you can bear your witness to your own personal experience of what that life means, and of the reality of the power which God gives to those who honestly try to use the means He has put at our disposal to enable us to live the life.

But how are we to start doing this? "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. xi. 6).

That is to say, first of all we must make a venture of faith. But what is faith? What does it mean? People often talk as if faith was something peculiar to religion, but when St Paul says, "We walk by faith and not by sight," he was simply stating a fact of everyday experience. It is on faith, on mutual trust, that all human relationships are based—certainly in the civilized world—love, friendship, business, commerce, as well as all the ordinary affairs of everyday life. What man, for instance, is ever likely to induce any self-respecting woman to become his wife if he goes about it in this way: "I like you very much, indeed I think you are very attractive, but before asking you to be my wife would you kindly furnish me with testimonials as to your character, your ability to

keep your temper, and your capacity to manage a household economically?" What really happens is that when a man asks a woman to marry him he makes a tremendous venture of faith, and, if she accepts his offer, she also makes a tremendous venture of faith. Most women, I expect, would say, "a much bigger one!" Both feel justified in making it. Why? Because they feel they can and they must. Neither could explain why, and neither want to try; they just know that they love each other and that is enough. If anyone asked any man why he loved his wife, or any woman why she loved her husband, the only answer they could give, if they really did love, would be, "just because I do." I suppose that the reason is that nobody can explain any of the ultimate things in life, love, beauty, goodness, truth, and no sensible person would ever attempt to do so. Who would attempt to explain the beauty of a glorious sunset, or the thrill of a Beethoven sonata? You see it, and feel it, or you don't, and that is all that can be said. You cannot certainly get a wife or husband except on the basis of mutual trust and faith, nor can your subsequent life as man and wife be continued on any other foundation. Nor can you get a friend except on the same terms. Nor could world commerce be carried on except on the same basis, though in business we call it "credit," but it means the same thing. And this "credit" or "faith" is ultimately in the trustworthiness of other people to meet their obligations, people, perhaps, whom you have never actually seen in the flesh, during a business con-

nection of a lifetime. Every time you post a letter you are acting on the same basis of faith or trust in the postman, in the officials of the post-office, in those responsible for the transport of your letter, the railway and the steamship companies, including engine-drivers and stokers, signalmen and sailors, and many others, and ultimately perhaps in a native carrier somewhere in the heart of Central Africa! Every time you look up a train in *Bradshaw* and go to the station to catch it you are "walking not by sight but by faith."

So it is with all our relationship to God and to our Lord Jesus Christ, for Christianity means the realization here and now of our right relationship to God, a relationship between two personalities, of son to Father, of subject to King, of creature to Creator, a relationship of love, friendship, obedience, service, dependence, partnership, and co-operation, and that relationship we can never realize unless we are prepared to make a big venture of faith.

But what is our justification for making it? Is it reasonable that we should? My answer is this. The life and character of our Lord Jesus Christ appeals to that which I recognize is the best in me, as utterly good and true and trustworthy. It is not primarily what He said but what He was that makes that appeal. As I think of Him I feel in my bones that I know He can be trusted, and therefore I am prepared to trust Him, to take Him at His word and at least try to do what He tells me. And when I do, what do I find? Just this, that when I test what He says by the hard

facts of experience I find it works, and that which began as a venture of faith without experience to back it, with the backing of practical experience becomes a conviction, and to all intents and purposes a certainty. That, of course, is just what happens again and again in our own experience in our relationships to others, in the love between man and wife, friend and friend, in business, in posting letters, or in catching trains. Besides, we to-day have behind us nineteen centuries of the experience of all kinds of people in all ages, men and women who have themselves made this venture of faith in our Lord and have borne testimony to their conviction that He is Perfect God and Perfect Man, and can be utterly and completely trusted.

So, then, if we would really know anything about Christianity as the only way of living all life, and be able to pass it on to others, we must start by making this venture of faith, and go to Christ and sit at His feet and study His life and the principles on which He lived it, and then honestly try to apply those same principles to the living of our own lives.

But anyone who has ever tried to teach anyone else anything knows well enough that he must first get the subject clear in his own mind. He must be able to see the parts in their proper relationships to the whole, otherwise his teaching will lack coherence. The failure to do this in the teaching of religion is, I think, one of the chief causes of much of its ineffectiveness: it so often appears to the listener to be scrappy and discon-

nected, a series of disjointed dogmas or moral maxims with little relation to one another and still less to everyday life. Once get the big fundamental principles clear and the details will fall into their place. In the following pages I shall try to deal with these fundamental principles under five heads, in what appears to me at least to be their logical sequence, the Christian idea of (1) God; (2) Man; (3) the World and the Church; (4) Prayer and Sacrament; and (5) the Life which should issue therefrom.

I have used the expression "The Christian Idea" because "ideas" are the things which really matter in life; it is what we think in our hearts, *i.e.*, really believe, that makes us what we are. That is, after all, what the word "dogma" means, and if people realized it more they would not talk such a lot of nonsense as they often do about the uselessness of dogma or dogmatic teaching, or give expression to such statements as "It doesn't matter what a man believes so long as he lives a good life." A little thought will show what arrant nonsense this is. For, first of all, what is a good life? that apparently is taken for granted, but why? And does it make no difference what a man believes? Supposing a husband really believes that the only thing which matters in life is that he should have "a good time" and enjoy himself, ask his wife if this belief of his makes no difference to her.

The word "dogma," as used in connection with the Christian religion, simply denotes that which has come to be thought or believed by Christians

down the ages. "That God exists" is a dogma, "that Jesus of Nazareth was God Incarnate" is a dogma. The fact is, that in practical everyday life none of us can get away from "dogmas" in some form or other, true or false, generally accepted, or merely our own individual ideas. Nobody really ever does anything that he does not want to do. I do not mean that nobody ever does anything which they don't *like*, but nothing which they do not think in their heart or believe is for them right, good, profitable, pleasant, amusing or satisfying in some form or other; in other words, the "ideas" we hold make us in the long run what we are. Creed makes character. Think it out; you will find it really is true.

So when it comes to trying to teach anyone else the Christian way of living, remember that the most important thing of all is to present to him and suggest to him the right ideas, the Christian ideas, the ideas on which Christ based His own life. At the same time it must not be forgotten that the Christian religion is based on the actual life and teaching of a Person, a historic character, who lived at a certain date and in a certain part of the world; it is therefore essential to the full knowledge of the religion which He founded to know the facts of His life and teaching, but not for the sake of the facts themselves, but for the sake of the ideas which that life proclaimed and taught. It is from the study of that life that we can find out what those ideas or principles are. How shall we set about it?

CHAPTER III

THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

WE have already referred to the fact that Christianity is not merely a philosophy of life or a code of morals, but a life to be lived. This is abundantly clear from our Lord's own teaching. Whatever else may be difficult to understand in that teaching no one can have any doubt as to His object in coming into the world. He has Himself told us what it was, in one short sentence. "I am come," He said, "that men might have life and might have it more abundantly" (St John x. 10). He came to satisfy the most fundamental instinct in human nature, the instinct to live and to live as fully as possible. That is what all normal people want. If a man commits suicide the verdict brought in at the Coroner's inquest is almost always that he did so "while temporarily insane," on the ground that no really sane or normal man in full control of his senses would ever do such a thing: and the reason is probably sound.

There is no doubt at all, then, that the object of the Christian religion is to make life for all human beings more worth living by making it fuller, richer, and more satisfying, as it will become if lived according to God's plan. The pathetic thing

is that this truth of a fuller and richer, more satisfying and happier life is about the last thing which a vast number of people would ever think of connecting with the religion of Christ. And yet this is exactly what Christian people down the ages, as well as to-day, who have deliberately tried to live their lives by it, would say was their own personal experience. Through it life has become for them an entirely different thing—fuller, richer, more satisfying and infinitely happier. Our Lord came, then, for Life. His message, translated into ordinary everyday language, could be summed up in some such way as this: “You want life on a bigger and more satisfying scale: you can have it because that is what God made you for; but only on certain conditions, and the conditions are these:

“First of all, you must make a big act of faith. You must make an assumption which you cannot prove except by the experience of life—that is, by acting upon it as if it were true; that assumption is that God exists and is the Creator, the Supreme Ruler of the world and everything and everybody in it; and that as King He has laid down certain laws.

“Secondly, you must find out for yourself the laws that govern human life, and this you can do if you will take the trouble to study My life, and the principles upon which it was deliberately based.

“And thirdly, when you have found out what those principles are you must try your hardest to apply them to your own everyday life. You will be able to do this, for you will find among them

one big principle running through them all, and that is the principle of dependence upon and co-operation with God ; and if you follow My example in this way you will find by experience that God will give you the power to live all your life on the same principles as governed Mine on earth. You will find, in other words, that I have not merely set you an ideal to follow, but have shown you how you can get the power to follow it." Belief in God as the Supreme Law-giver, the discovery of His laws and faithful obedience to them ; that, according to our Lord, is the secret of living full, rich, satisfying lives.

And in this Christ anticipated the principles on which as a fact all scientific progress has been made. Science starts on the assumption that the physical world is governed by "Law." By research and experiment it discovers what those laws are, and when it discovers them, obeys them. "To command Nature you must first obey Nature," as Bacon asserted three hundred years ago. The wonderful progress which Science has made, and not least in the last thirty years, has led many to think that, given time, it will solve all the problems of life. But as it has been said, all human problems can be reduced to one ultimate problem, and that is, "How to live together." It is true ; it is true of the home, of the community in village, town, or nation ; it is true of the life of industry and commerce ; it is true internationally. If man could once solve this problem all would be well. But so far from scientific discoveries having helped towards a solution they have actually made it

more difficult. Amongst other things, by means of wireless, flying, telephone and telegraph, they have brought men and nations far closer together; they have vastly increased the points of human contact, and thereby they have also increased the possibilities of friction.

Now the ultimate factor in the problem of how to live together is man himself, what you and I and others *are*. It is the "I" in each one of us which really matters, and that is not a material but a spiritual factor; hence the ultimate problem of human life is not material but spiritual, and must be dealt with on that basis.

But what do we mean when we speak of the Spiritual? As the meaning and the reality which we attach to this word is of prime importance we must consider it. What does it mean? Is it real? I suppose one of the main difficulties encountered by a teacher of Christianity is that to many people "the spiritual" means something, if not quite unreal, yet far less real than the material. I do not think it would be any exaggeration to say that to most people the real is that which they can see and touch, eat or sit upon, and yet a little thought would soon show them that it is not so, but rather that the spiritual is far more real than the material. Begin with yourself. What is the most real thing about you? Is it your body? Is it the grey matter in your skull which you call your brain? No, it is that behind both body and brain, that which expresses itself through body and brain, dependent no doubt, as we are constituted in this life, upon both body

and brain, and yet something which transcends both—"myself," "my personality," the "I" in me.

Or, again, what is it that has had the greatest influence in making "you" what you are? Is it the food you have eaten, the houses you have lived in, the beds on which you have slept? All these things have gone to make you what you are, and perhaps more especially the surroundings in which you have lived, the beautiful or ugly buildings of your early home; but the strongest factor in the formation of your character has been the personal influence of those among whom you have been brought up. But what is personal influence? Who can explain it any more than you can explain what the "I" in you is? And yet we know—when we come to think of it—that however intangible or invisible this mysterious thing we call personal influence is, it is actually far more real than anything else in our experience; and, further, although it is indeed dependent upon material things for its expression and transmission, such as faces, bodies, words, writing, it is *not* itself material, but spiritual.

Think this out for yourself, for unless Spirit is real to you, you will never be able to grip the reality of Christ's message or to pass it on to others, for that message, though concerned with every bit of us, body, mind, and spirit, and with everything we think and say and do, yet primarily is concerned with *ourselves*, the "I" in each one of us, that fundamental spiritual reality in human life, and with the laws of God which govern the spirit of man.

It is these laws of God which our Lord became incarnate in order to reveal, and the laws of God are the outcome of Himself—that is, of His own character.

What, then, is God like? What is the Christian idea of God? These are the questions which we will now consider.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF GOD

ONE of the main difficulties with which anyone who starts out to teach the Christian faith finds himself confronted is the prevalence of wrong ideas about God, His nature, character, and being. Again and again he finds that the ideas which are prevalent even among professing Christians are as a fact entirely un-Christian, utterly unlike those which our Lord Himself taught.

It is probably true that a good many of these erroneous ideas have come from the fact that the first impressions or ideas of God which many received as children came from the earlier books of the Old Testament, and first impressions last long. The Old Testament is the record of the gradual and progressive education of the people of Israel, and through them of the world, in the knowledge of God and His character. This gradual development of the knowledge of God is clearly seen by comparing the earlier books of the Old Testament with the later Prophetic books. When this education had sufficiently advanced, in the fullness of time Christ came—the Light of the World. Before the coming of the full Light we need not be surprised to find the knowledge of God and of goodness inadequate, partial, and imperfect. This

fact explains much that is difficult to understand otherwise in that standard of morality which, so obviously inferior to the standard of the New Testament, is often taken for granted and even commended in the Old Testament.

If we would understand the Old Testament and teach it intelligently to others we must read it in this light, and test its statements by the teaching and character of Christ, and be prepared to reject what falls below that standard. This is as a fact the way in which our Lord Himself dealt with the Mosaic Law when He enunciated the laws of the Kingdom of God in the Sermon on the Mount.

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time . . . but I say unto you . . . ”

If therefore we are to teach others the Christian idea of God our teaching must be Christ-centred : it must begin with Him and end with Him and continually circle round Him. If this had always been done we should not find professing Christians to-day thinking of God as a sort of ogre who is always watching to catch us out doing something naughty, and ready to pounce upon us when He does so ; or, on the other hand, as a merely benevolent Being who will allow us to do anything we like, and then at last put it all right for us !—in other words, as One who treats men as slaves or machines and not as free-will agents. If we believed that our Lord revealed in His own life the character and nature of God, we should not go on talking as if God took any pleasure in any form of disorder, discord, or disease, whether in the physical, mental, moral, or spiritual spheres,

for our Lord was always out to fight against all such things. It would not be possible for anyone to define "an act of God"—the phrase which occurs in an insurance policy, as "any disaster which cannot otherwise be reasonably accounted for."

But the only sure way of counteracting erroneous ideas is to teach the right ones. What, then, is the idea of God which we get from the life and teaching of our Lord? What is God like?

We Christians would answer, "God is like Jesus," because we believe Jesus was Himself God Incarnate. Remember all belief is an act of faith, and an act of faith, as we have seen, is, at least to begin with, an assumption which you cannot prove except by making it, acting upon it, and thereby testing it by the hard facts of experience. So with this belief in Jesus as God Incarnate; it only came to His first disciples gradually; ultimately it became a conviction, and the fundamental conviction of the whole of their religious belief as we see in the writings of St Paul, St John, and in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Later on it became embodied in the Christian Creeds, which sum up that faith and which have been handed down through the ages to the present generation.

But the first appeal which Jesus made to those who knew Him in the flesh was just the appeal of Man to man. Here was somebody, apparently an ordinary man like themselves, yet quite extraordinarily different, the kindest person they had ever seen, utterly selfless, ready at all times to give Himself completely to anyone who needed His help, wholly self-sacrificing, and yet entirely

natural ; treating everyone, rich and poor alike ; a friend to all ; a man who, wherever He went, brought light and sunshine into all the dingy corners of life, hope and encouragement to everyone down and out, fresh health and strength to the sick, the weak, the lonely and the sad. And though He was the kindest, most generous person they had ever met—and that I always think must have been the first appeal to them, as I believe it is to us—yet there was nothing weak or sentimental about His kindness. They had surely never met anyone who had such clear and strong convictions as to what was right and wrong, or anyone who was so determined to stand by them at all costs. And what man had ever set before others such a high ideal, or had lived His own life on such a tremendously high level ? Here, obviously, was a man “under authority” with the consciousness of a tremendous mission—not from man but from God Himself. He spoke as no other man had ever spoken, He spoke and taught with the confidence of an authority utterly unlike any other teacher they had ever met. Nothing apparently had any power to shake Him in His convictions, because He was convinced that what He stood for was the law of the One Supreme Law-giver—God, and that He had been sent to bear witness to the truth by God Himself. So it was that they watched Him carrying out His mission with a sure and steady confidence, regardless of success or failure, right up to the end, when He hung on the Cross, stripped and bare, having given all. And yet always wholly master of Him-

self, without one thought or word of resentment, either against His nearest friends who had betrayed, denied, and forsaken Him, or against the people clamouring for His death for whom He literally gave His life. And had anyone ever before treated ordinary men with such an amazing sense of the dignity of human nature? He never minced matters, never came down to their level, never tried to make things easy, but He never did anything for anyone, even to answering a question which He knew that person could do for himself. He had always treated each one of them not only with an understanding sympathy, but always with a quite wonderful sense of their own individual dignity. Never could there have been anyone more desperately keen to win men to His way of thinking, but never once did He try either to win them by any sort of bribery, or to force them to accept what He said as true. He always treated every man and woman as a free responsible agent. He just loved and waited. "He drew men with cords of a man by bands of love." Although He longed to win their love, He knew that nobody—not even God Himself—could force it.

And what was the secret of this character? What lay behind it all? Where did He get the power which was so obviously His and nobody else's? Our Lord's character was the direct outcome of His Creed or His ideas about God and man. His love of His fellow-men, His life of service and sacrifice for them, His complete dependence upon God for the spirit and power to enable Him to do His work—these three main charac-

teristics of our Lord's life can be directly traced to His three main ideas about God. First, that He is the Father of the whole human race, and that therefore all men are brethren. Secondly, that He is the Supreme King or Ruler of the universe and therefore must be obeyed, and that His one supreme law governing all human life is the law of love, which means service and sacrifice. Thirdly, that He is not only the Creator, but the Source and Sustainer of all life, and therefore from Him alone must be sought the power to live.

I often think how desperately tired that little band of disciples must themselves have felt as they followed our Lord round on His journeys hither and thither, and still more, how they must have marvelled at the way He was able to go on, giving out all the time, yet infinitely patient, quiet, and serene; always at it, yet never worried or fussed—there is no hint of such a thing throughout the whole gospel story. But He had what to them must have seemed a queer habit after His day's work was over, or very early in the morning—when they were still dog-tired and sound asleep—of going off by Himself to some “desert place” or lonely spot, some wood or hill, where He could be quiet and alone and pray. This must have struck them as odd, and I expect they often discussed it among themselves, and after a time must have come to the conclusion that somehow it was here that the secret lay. Finally, as we know, they asked Him to teach them to pray, to show them how they too could get something of the power that they saw was His, a power so unlike

anything they had ever known before. They had never certainly come across anyone to whom God was such an absolute reality.

But that was not all. Here was apparently an ordinary man who not only lived closer to God than anyone they had ever met before, but made what for any other man would have been perfectly outrageous claims of an intimacy, and indeed a oneness, with the Father, which no one but a madman would ever dream of making. There was no doubt about these claims which our Lord made. They were the occasion more than once of rousing a furious opposition to Him and to His teaching, on the ground of blasphemy, especially on the part of those whose special duty it was to guard the faith of the Jewish people and to teach it. And yet the men who knew Him best and were most closely associated with Him, day in and day out, appear to have thought these claims natural and normal. There is no suggestion on their part that the Master "was beside Himself" when He made them: not that they fully understood what He meant, but they were prepared absolutely to trust Him. "*Aut Deus aut non bonus homo.*" Either He was God or was not a good man, and they knew with the certain and unshaken conviction which comes from personal knowledge of a most intimate character that He was not merely a good man but the best Man they had ever known or ever conceived of. Later, by a personal experience of their own in their everyday-life relationship to Him after His death, resurrection, and ascension, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit came the

growing conviction formulated by St John that He was indeed God manifest in the flesh, and that God was like what they knew Jesus to have been when they knew Him on earth.

It was, then, from this intimate personal knowledge of our Lord and His character, as well as from His direct teaching, that they came to a truer and fuller idea of God. They still thought of Him as the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, the King of Kings, but they had come to think of Him first and foremost as the Father, and themselves (and all men without distinction of race, language, or colour) as His children. The Father who was Himself perfect Love, who knew each one of them through and through, and yet, in spite of that, loved them not merely in the mass, but each one with an individual and personal love and care and understanding. And through the self-sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross they had come to see a new meaning in the word Love. It was no longer a matter merely of sentiment or emotion, but translated into ordinary everyday life it meant one thing: it meant giving, not getting—the giving of yourself to and for another, in service. That was what they had learnt from our Lord's life, and that ultimate quality of love they now knew to be the ultimate nature of God. That God is love was the great new truth to be added to the awe-full "holiness" of God, the Creator and Ruler of the universe, which they had already learnt from the prophets of the Old Testament. They came then to think of God as the most loving of Fathers, whose one object was

to give Himself—as He had given Himself in Christ—for the fuller and richer life of every member of His great family : who was always out for life, harmony, and health, and therefore always against every form of disorder, discord, and disease. They came to know Him as the God who believed in them and trusted them, who never treated them except as free and responsible beings ; who in creating man had taken him into partnership, and would never treat any man as a slave or as a machine, but always as a son—ininitely loving, infinitely patient, and infinitely understanding. But they also came to know Him as their King, whose law of love was the supreme law governing all human life. Finally, they thought of God not only as the Creator but as the one source and sustainer of all life, physical, mental and spiritual. To Him they learnt that they could go at all times and in all places, and tell Him of their difficulties and troubles, their joys and sorrows, their failures and their needs. They knew that He would not only listen, but forgive and forget if they repented of their sins, and take them back into the home however far they had wandered, and wash their wounds, and heal and restore, and pour into them fresh life and love and light and power, and save and make whole and healthy, that they might have life, and have it more abundantly. For they believed that Jesus had spoken the truth when He said : “ He that hath seen ME hath seen the Father.”

CHAPTER V

THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF MAN

WHAT do we Christians believe God means us men to be? What is our true nature, character, and relation to God, and through Him to our fellow-men?

Again we go to our Lord for the answer to these questions: Man is meant to be like Jesus.

We saw in the last chapter Christ's idea of God is that of the Father of the whole human race, who is Himself perfect Love; of the Supreme Ruler of the whole world, whose supreme law is the law of Love; of the Creator, who is also the source and support of all life, physical, mental, moral, and spiritual.

What, then, is man? and what is he meant by God to be? Why did God create him, and for what purpose?

First, if God is the Father of the whole family of the human race, every member of that race is a son or daughter of the Father, created, as the Bible tells us, "in His own image." What does this mean? It means surely that God in creating man has endowed him with those qualities which make man capable of sharing God's life with Him—with His own reason, with His own capacity of loving, with His own freedom of will. An artist

can paint a portrait of himself, or make a statue in stone almost, if not quite, in his own image—but neither would be able to share his thoughts, his desires, or his work: there could be no real personal intercourse between the artist and his creation in paint or marble; but with a child of his own, personal intercourse is possible, because the child has the same capacity of living, thinking, loving, and doing as the father.

We believe, then, that man is in that sense made in the image of the Father God, to share in God's life, and to respond to His love. But to love you must be free. You cannot force anyone to love you, as we saw our Lord showed all through His earthly life in dealing with others. You can by force make other people do many things, but the one thing you cannot force anyone to do is to love you; that is, and must always be, the spontaneous outcome of a person's own will. So it is that we believe man is not a machine, nor a slave, nor even a hireling, but a son and free agent.

There are those, of course, who will tell us that there is no such thing as Free-will, that every one of us is as a fact simply the sport of circumstances and heredity, that our sense of being free-will agents is only a delusion. My answer to such people is simply this. Of course I freely admit that my freedom is limited: that is obvious; there are certain things which I cannot do, but within those limits I am perfectly conscious that I can choose between A and B; or C and D, and this consciousness of freedom to choose I find is inherent in every other normal human being that

I have ever known. And further, it is, I find, just this consciousness of freedom that in the last resort man believes to constitute that which makes life; for it is to retain that freedom that men are prepared even to sacrifice their own lives, and so it has been all down the ages—this consciousness of freedom is the one priceless possession and the one indispensable requisite for human life in any real sense. If it is, after all, a delusion, then I cannot see myself why all life and all existence should not equally be a delusion, and if so, then all it comes to is that the whole world is one big madhouse, inhabited by a race of lunatics. For my part I am not yet prepared to accept this theory of life!

If, then, as we believe, God is Love, and made us men to share His life of love, we must—within limits—be free men, for unless we are free we cannot love, and therefore cannot share God's life, for which we believe He created us. And is not this the way, as we know from our own experience, that God actually treats us? He treats us always as free men. He will not force us to do what is right, and if we want to do wrong He does not forcibly prevent us. We know by experience that if we want to live we must eat, but if we like to do so we can go on "hunger strike" and starve ourselves till we die. But God does not interfere. We can, if we like to do so, deliberately walk over a precipice and kill ourselves, but God does not catch hold of us as we approach the edge of the precipice and forcibly pull us back. He never treats us as machines, or slaves, but always as free

men. And this, as we have already seen, was the way our Lord always treated men. He never attempted to force anyone to believe or to think or to do anything, and He never did anything for anyone else which that person could do for himself. He always treated others both as free men and responsible persons. That fact is to me perhaps the most cogent argument for believing in the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and for this reason. He is the only Reformer that the world has ever seen who did not sooner or later try *to make* others believe what He said was true, and do what He said was right. There has certainly never been any reformer who must have so passionately longed for men to accept his message and fashion their lives according to it, and yet the picture I always have of our Lord in His relation to those whom He taught is that of a man with his hands behind his back, refusing to use even a little finger to force anyone to believe what he said or do what he bade him. The more I try to think of God's patience with myself and others, the more marvellous does that characteristic of His nature become. The more I study our Lord's life the more do I find that He treated men just as I know God treats me, and always has, and I see in that treatment God made manifest in human flesh.

Our relationship to God, therefore, is meant to be the same as our Lord's, as we see in the Gospel, a relationship of love and sonship.

Secondly, our relationship to God must be that of subject to king, of obedience to His supreme

law of the home and family, the law of God's own being, the law of love. But love means giving, not getting, the giving of yourself in service to another. As our Lord said, "I am among you as one that serveth," so we men must each one of us be among our fellow-men as one who is not out for self but for service. The law of service must be the governing principle of human life, if man is to be what God means him to be.

Thirdly, our relationship to God must be that of creature to the Creator, of dependence upon and co-operation with God as free partners. A moment's thought will show us that our own experience of ordinary life confirms this. Take, for instance, the matter of food. Experience shows us that it is essential to the sustaining of human life: without it you die. By eating proper food the life-force in that food becomes a part of yourself, part of your blood, bone, brain, and flesh. But "if a man will not work neither shall he eat." If man is to sustain the physical life within him he must have food, but he cannot have bread unless he or somebody else works for it: the food must be grown. God gives the seed, the soil, the sun and the rain, and the increase, but man must plough, sow, reap, grind and bake, and finally eat and digest—that is the side of his partnership with the Creator which is left to man to carry out, and if he does not do so he cannot live. So it is with everything else which is essential to the sustaining of human life, houses, clothes, warmth, air, light, and exercise. In building

houses, for instance, with proper ventilation, man is fulfilling the divine law of dependence upon and co-operation with God. And what is true in the physical is also true in the mental sphere. The mind must be fed with healthy food—which we call ideas. These ideas are brought to the mind through the medium of our senses, sight and hearing. They come to us by contact with nature and with our fellow-men, through personal intercourse, either by word of mouth or some other medium of expressing thought, such as literature, music, or art. It is by the assimilation of such ideas or suggestions brought to us from without that our minds are fed and kept healthy, if the ideas are sound—and become unhealthy, if they are unsound.

What is true of human life in the physical and mental spheres is, as our Lord has shown both by His own life as well as by His teaching, true also of our spiritual lives, that part of us as we have already seen which is most really ourselves, the “I” in each one of us. That is also dependent upon God, the source of life, whether physical, mental, or spiritual, and must be daily reinforced and sustained by taking in from Him fresh supplies of spiritual life-force, and in this the same law of man’s co-operation with God holds good. “If a man will not work neither shall he eat” is as true of the spiritual as of the physical life; it is not merely an economic law of man, it is part of the divine law of God.

From the Christian idea of God, as made known to man by the life and teaching of our Lord, as

also by the study of our Lord's own earthly life as Man, we see what man is meant by God to be : first, a member of one great family—the human race—of which God is the Father ; secondly, a citizen of the Kingdom of God whose duty is to obey His law, which is the law of the family, the law of love, which means service ; and, thirdly, the creature of the Creator, on whom he is utterly dependent, whose duty it is to fulfil his partnership with Him, not as a slave or as a machine, but as a son, free and responsible.

From this we see the three great principles governing all human life, that of fellowship, service, and dependence upon and co-operation with God. Fellowship with God, and through Him with all other members of the family ; and fellowship, as a fact, is only possible on a basis not of individual selfishness but of mutual service, while that is impossible except through the work of the spirit of God in the heart of man. These are the laws of human life, corresponding to the character and nature of God as Father, King, and Creator, which anyone who wants to teach others the Christian faith and life must first grasp clearly in his own mind, for only so can the Christian religion be properly understood, founded as it is on the right idea of God as made known through Jesus, perfect God and perfect Man.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF THE WORLD AND THE HUMAN RACE

THE Christian idea of the world and the human race is summed up for us in the first two words of the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father": the world is a home, and the whole human race one family under the Father God.

From the Christian idea of the Fatherhood of God follows the Christian idea of the Brotherhood of Man. It is well that we should realize that no religion has ever laid such stress as Christianity upon the dignity and value of each individual human being. "Everyone counts for one, and nobody counts for more than one." Further, no religion has ever made it clearer than Christianity has done that religion is the realization in life of the individual's right relationship to God: it is in the last resort "a love affair" between the soul and God. Yet, on the other hand, no religion lays greater stress on the fact that the individual is never an isolated entity all by himself, but always a member of Society—"a social animal," as Aristotle put it—a member of a body, who can only fully realize his own individuality by realizing his right relationship to every other member of that body. The Christian belief is that this right relation between indi-

vidual members of the body is one of fellowship, service, and dependence upon and co-operation with one another ; and, further, that this relationship can only be fully realized by each individual, through first realizing his or her relationship to God. The Christian belief is, in short, that it is only by first learning to love God that you can ever fully learn to love your neighbour. St Paul, of course, is continually insisting upon this corporate side of the Christian life. He speaks of the Church as Christ's body, that is, not a man-made organization, but, like the human body, a divinely created living organism.

Now in the human body every member counts and has its own special function, which it can alone perform ; the health of the body as a whole depends upon each member being healthy and functioning properly, not for itself, but for the health of the whole body. So St Paul saw that God meant the whole human race eventually to become one body through union with Christ. One body composed not only of many individual members (each and all different from the other), but of many nations and races throughout the world, each having an equal right to live its fullest life, for only so could it make its special contribution to the wholeness or health or well-being and fullest life of the whole body of the human race, for every part of the body is dependent upon every other part.

Now this ideal of the whole human race being meant to be one corporate whole, one living organism or unity, is one which we in the twentieth century ought to be able to grasp far better perhaps

than any previous generation. Whatever else the Great War did for the human race, good or bad, it certainly brought home to people in a way in which it had never been brought home before, the fact of the essential interdependence of every nation on every other. We realized then as never before that the human race was really one. So with the General Strike of a few years ago ; some of us for the first time in our lives began to appreciate how utterly dependent we were for practically all the necessities of life upon other people doing, and doing regularly and efficiently, their several jobs of work. We realized that it is only necessary to induce a sufficient number of people to agree to do nothing more violent than to stay in bed for, say, a day, in order to bring the ordered life of Society and of every individual in it to a sudden standstill. It is this idea of the ideal unity of the human race with which the Christian faith is permeated ; it springs, of course, from the Christian idea of one God who is the one Father of the whole family of nations. The human race, then, according to Christianity, is meant to be One Body and One Family.

The family is something we all understand. In a family and home every member counts for one, and nobody counts for more than one. In the family there must be law, order, and discipline, otherwise the home ceases to be a home and becomes a bear-garden. But the discipline of the home is not enforced at the business end of a hunting-crop or cane, though some of us remember that occasionally one's father had recourse to these methods,

and probably quite rightly, for by them an impression was made upon us which certainly lasted some time; but no home worthy of the name could be run normally on those lines. There is force of a kind behind the discipline of all good homes, but it is the compelling power of love.

Again, the happiness of a home is dependent upon every member of the family making his special contribution to the whole, each member having different or special characteristics, and yet all having to live together as one body. That is why being a member of a large family of brothers and sisters is probably the best education anyone can receive for life: it teaches him to learn to live together with all sorts of odd people, that is to say, with people who in spite of their family likeness do not "match," but are all different. That, as we have seen, is the ultimate problem of life—"how to live together."

And in the home there is competition, but not the competition which is out to "down" somebody else, or "to get on" at the expense of another, but that kind of competition which we saw in the war between individuals, platoons, companies, battalions, brigades, and divisions, the competition not of getting but of giving, for the sake of their country. Each member is out to be and do his best, and if success comes to one member satisfaction is felt by all because some honour has thereby come to the family and home. "Where one member suffers all members suffer with it, and where one member rejoices all the members rejoice with it," and the weakest does not go to the wall: quite otherwise. If one member of a family is

either mentally or physically less robust than the rest, he becomes the first care of the rest of the family, because a really good home is permeated with the spirit of family love. That is the ideal human home and family, and some of us have been fortunate enough to know homes and families which, if not absolutely attaining it, very closely approximate to that ideal.

And that is what we Christians believe God means the world and the whole human race to be—one big family made up of all kinds of nations and races permeated with the spirit of Christ, the spirit of love and fellowship, mutual service, and dependence upon and co-operation between all the members of the family.

That is, we believe, God's plan for the world ; in practice it is, as we know, vastly different. And why ? What is the Christian answer ? It is this. God, we believe, created man to share His own life, the life of perfect love. He created him with the capacity to respond to that love, and therefore—as we have already seen—made man a free-will agent, for to love you must be free. But if man is free to love, then he must also be free to hate ; if he is free to obey, he must also be free to disobey ; if he is free to co-operate with God, he must also be free to refuse such co-operation. We Christians believe that it is just this refusal to respond to the love of God and to obey Him and to co-operate with Him, to which the disorder, discord, and disease of the world to-day is due. We believe that the ultimate reason why the world and the human race are not what God means them to be is that man is living

apart from, instead of in harmony with God, His will and purpose. This we call sin, that which separates from God. But the human race is one, the refusal therefore to live according to God's plan—or the ignorance of that plan—has produced in the whole body of the human race hatred for love, selfishness for service, competition for comradeship, discord for harmony, disease for health, and misery for happiness.

But we shall be told that the Christian idea of sin is really a delusion, that there is no such thing in the sense that we understand it, that is, as the consciousness of guilt, the consciousness that "we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and done those things which we ought not to have done." These critics will tell us that there is no such thing as "ought" about it, that it is merely a question of gradual evolution or growth or education. What is our answer? There are at least three reasons which we can give to show that this theory of growth or evolution will not do.

The first is that it does not account for the fact that from the earliest records of the history of the human race which we have, we find this "consciousness of guilt" inherent in man. The second is that the higher man progresses in the scale of goodness, and the higher his ideal becomes, the keener and stronger do we find this consciousness of sin and guilt. In the saint we find this sense infinitely more highly developed than in the ordinary loose-living, careless man or woman. As somebody has said, it is only a saint or someone on the way to becoming a saint who can honestly call

himself "a miserable sinner"; the ordinary man simply does not understand what the words mean. How does your objector to the Christian idea of sin and guilt account for this? The third reason is that the whole of civilized Society is built up on the basis that the individual, if he is normal, is a responsible being, responsible for what he does and for what he omits to do, and Society treats him as such. If a man is charged before a judge and jury with theft or murder, his counsel may of course plead in defence that he is not normal, and therefore not responsible for his actions, but this defence would only be accepted on the ground that the prisoner was not normal; if it could be proved by the prosecution that he was normal, the plea that he was only in the process of being "evolved" and therefore not responsible would certainly not be considered a sufficiently good reason for his acquittal. When we think of ourselves and our own experience, who of us would deny that we are certain we are free to choose, and have done so again and again, between two courses of action, one right and the other wrong, and that we are equally certain that we have again and again chosen the wrong instead of the right, and have been perfectly conscious that we did so, whatever excuses we may make at the time or after in palliation of our fault and wrong-doing?

That is why I say that this very pleasant and comforting theory that there is no such thing as sin really will not do, for it cuts at the very root of human life as we know it in ourselves and in others; it denies the ultimate responsibility of every normal

human being in the eyes of himself and of others, as well as in the eyes of God.

So then the Christian idea is that the world is meant by God to be a home, His home and ours, and the whole human race one big family under one Father, one corporate unity of which every individual and every race is an integral and indispensable member, in which, as in the human body, where even one member is not living according to God's plan and fulfilling his appointed function, the whole body suffers in consequence. Further, that the actual condition of the human race to-day, with its disorder, discord, and disease, is due to man having used his freedom of will in refusing, or failing to respond to the love of God, and to live his life according to God's plan. This refusal or failure we call sin, and it was to put these things right—to make good the ravages of sin, which separates man from God—that the Son of God became Man, to bring man back to God, by making man and God “at-one” again, which we call the “at-one-ment” or atonement. Christ came “to save the world,” to heal, restore, and remake, healthy, whole or holy the entire human race, “that men might have life and have it more abundantly.”

CHAPTER VII

CHRIST'S APPEAL

THE Incarnation was God's plan for restoring His original purpose for the human race. The Son of God became man in order to achieve the "at-one-ment" between man and God—to bring men back to obedience to the laws of God, "that men might have life and have it more abundantly." The Church in its wisdom has never attempted to define the doctrine of the Atonement, i.e., *how* the death of Christ saves man from his sins, for the simple reason that, however real the consciousness of the fact of the Atonement has been, the Church has always recognized that there are some things in life which defy definition—and that this is probably one of them.

At the same time it would, I suppose, be true to say that in the Cross—the symbol of the Christian faith and life—men have found all down the ages, and still find to-day, a revelation of the central truths of that faith which no mere words could ever have given them; the reality of the love of God for us men; the reality of sin and its hideous consequences, not only on the guilty but the innocent; the reality of forgiveness, and the truth that sacrifice is the very heart and essence of all true goodness.

The revelation of the love of God. For by the

life, passion, and death of God Incarnate He has shown us that He shrinks from no sacrifice, however great, if only He may win our hearts in response to His love. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," and we know it is true. How much truer must it be when a man is prepared to lay down his life not merely for his friends, but for his enemies, for those who hate him, for those who are frankly out to discredit him, break him, "down" him, and, if it may be, compass his death and destruction?

That is what the Cross stands for. It is the assurance to us men of the infinite love of God, that He does really love each one of us and believes it is worth while to go any lengths to win our love and co-operation. Once realize this and the whole outlook on life is changed. The most paralysing thing in life is fear, and the world is full of it; once eliminate fear from our human life and it would be revolutionized. As St John says, "Perfect love casteth out fear." It is the only thing which can, for fear is the devil and love is God. Once realize that that which is ultimately supreme in the world is Love, that God loves us as He loves everyone else individually, that His one purpose for us is that we should live full, rich, satisfying and therefore, in the truest sense, happy lives, and we have gone near to casting out all fear from our lives. The Cross, then, is the assurance that there is no real cause for fear, because God is Love, and God is supreme, and with Him we must be safe and secure.

But the Cross is also the appeal of sheer goodness. As we look at the picture of our Lord on the Cross

there is that within us which knows (without any desire to argue the point) that it represents, as nothing else can, that which we instinctively feel is the real thing; it is the best of which human nature is capable; it is the embodiment of perfect love; it is the supreme sacrifice of self.

But the Cross of Christ is not really the symbol of death, but rather the symbol of life; of a life given from start to finish in response to the love of God. That whole life is therefore in a perfectly real sense an at-one-ment; the Cross stands for all time for the atonement for the sins of the whole world. It is human nature responding perfectly to, and at one with, the love of God, the complete surrender and sacrifice of self. That, at the last resort, is, we know, the very heart and essence of what we call goodness, or what the ordinary man calls morality. I say we know this as a fact, for in spite of what we happen to be ourselves, however far we are conscious of falling short of this ideal in our own everyday lives, yet we do know that in our scale of values we quite invariably put the sacrifice of self higher even than life itself. If not, why do we instinctively take our hats off to anyone who at the cost of his own life rescues another from death? Why is it that you will go through the length and breadth of this country to-day, and in every village and town you will find memorials to those who gave their lives in the war, and in no single case will you find one erected to the memory of a "war profiteer," a man who chose the path of "safety first," and lined his pockets at the expense of those who were giving all they had to give?

And this appreciation of sacrifice as the very essence of goodness is instinctive, it is deep-rooted in the consciousness of every human being, it is there because God put it there, it is ultimately the strongest thing in human nature. That is one of the reasons why we Christians believe that to try to teach what is called morality apart from the Christian religion is utterly futile and meaningless. For what do we mean by morality? It is surely the realization of our right relationship to our fellow-men, it is behaving towards others in the right way. But what do we mean by "right"? Is morality the same as the law of the land? Is a man, in other words, necessarily a moral man if he avoids breaking the civil law? Obviously not, for there are many things the doing of which are not against any law of the State, but which are clearly immoral, at all events from the Christian standpoint. To make a habit of taking for yourself the one comfortable armchair in the room when there are others who might sit in it is immoral, for it is selfish. To over-eat yourself or get drunk is immoral, because it denotes lack of control of your natural appetites; to live an idle life because your father happened to leave you £5000 a year is immoral; to be bad-tempered is also immoral; to commit fornication is immoral; but there is no law of the State forbidding you to do such things. What, then, is morality? Is it merely the generally accepted standards of the Society in which you happen to live? In other words, is it merely the convention of the people of your time and country? If so, then it would be quite possible for certain conduct

to be immoral in England, but quite moral in Central Africa, which is absurd.

Or, again, look at the question from the point of view of motive. It would be generally admitted that to prevent a brother man from starving, or to minister to the sick, if you have the means to do so, would be acting morally, but suppose a man gave a large sum of money to a Lord Mayor's Fund for starving miners, or for a hospital, with the ulterior object of getting a peerage, his so-called "charity" would obviously cease to have any real moral value. So with all actions good in themselves. What really counts from a moral point of view, even with the ordinary man, who might quite definitely tell you he had no use for religion, is the motive behind the act—in other words, the morality of an act depends upon the inward disposition of the man who does it, of the man himself, the "I" in him. Morality is the realization in conduct of a man's right relationship to his fellow-men. In the Christian belief this is the outcome of the realization of his right relationship to God, the centre of all life, for if a man is right with the centre he will be right with the circumference.

To the Christian, then, morality means obedience to the law of God, governing the relationships existing between human beings, between the members of His family. Just in proportion as a man lives according to these laws he is a moral man—he is good. But the essence of goodness, because it is the essence of God's law governing all human relationships, is love, and the essence and heart of love is, as we have seen, giving, and not getting, the

giving or the sacrifice of yourself to and for another's sake, with every thought of self obliterated. Your action must be an action of love, your motive must be the motive of love. That is not only the law of God, but to correspond with that law is the true nature of man; that is how God made him, and that is what God made him for. The only ultimate sanction for morality, the only real reason why I or anyone else should endeavour to be moral, is not because it happens to be a convenient way of carrying on Society (it is often horribly inconvenient to the person who is trying to act morally), but simply because it is God's law which it is my duty to obey, and to obey in the spirit of that law, and that law is Love—love of God, and through Him love of my fellow-men.

A thing is right if it is the law of God—it is wrong if it is not, and deep down in the heart of man, however overlaid it is by the overburden of sin, is the consciousness that that is true. That is why our Lord said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." Why, then, has He not drawn all men unto Him? Why is it that His appeal of sheer goodness has not found that response in the heart of man for which it was designed? Simply because we can, if we like, shut our eyes and close our ears to that appeal. We can disregard it, we can pass it by, we can deliberately run away from it and shut it out. For God will not force Himself or His love upon us. He has made us free men and will never go back on His original purpose for man, that as free men we shall respond freely to His appeal of love, and if we do not want to, we need

not. The appeal of Christ will never get home to our hearts and consciences unless we give it a chance of doing so ; to give it that chance with us must always be, in the last resort, a matter of a definite act of will on our part. We must stop and think. We must look and listen, we must get the obstacles away which block the light coming in ; we must turn our faces towards the light if the light is ever to shine upon them ; we must turn away from self to Him ; our whole outlook must be changed, we must be converted.

But once we do really give Christ His chance with us, and stop and think and look and listen, what happens ? Just this: His appeal gets home, it touches our hearts, it smites our consciences, it fires our wills—and why ? Because we are made like that. There is in each one of us something which cannot help responding to sheer love when we really see it, any more than gunpowder can help going off if it is brought into contact with a lighted match. Why ? Because “it is its nature to,” it is made like that. So with a diamond, it cannot help reflecting or responding to the light of the sun once it is exposed to that light—once, that is, that “the overburden,” the soil under which the diamond is buried, is removed.

Now until we get this conviction deep-rooted in ourselves, that human nature is made to respond to goodness rather than to evil, that it is in essence good, not bad, we shall never understand the Christian faith, and certainly will never be able to pass it on to anyone else. The difficulty is that, on the face of it, facts seem to be all against this

belief. It is so much easier apparently to respond to evil than it is to good : evil is so much more obvious in the world and apparently so much more widespread than goodness, selfishness than sacrifice, meanness than generosity, hatred than love, that we find ourselves accepting it as a matter of course. But why is it so ? Because it is always easier to go downhill than up. To go downhill requires no effort, you have only to lie down and roll and you will get to the bottom in due course, and probably with a bad smash at the end. To rise to the full height of your capacity in anything requires effort, power, and endurance ; to rise to the full height of your capacity for giving yourself, which is the essence of goodness, requires tremendous effort, and without it you will never get there ; the law of gravitation in the physical world has its counterpart in the spiritual.

The Cross, then, is not only the assurance of God's love for us, not only the appeal of sheer goodness, but it is also the supreme proof of God's belief in our capacity to respond to the highest and the best. That same belief we must have in ourselves and in others if we are ever to make anything of our own lives, or to help them to make anything of theirs. You can, I believe, do no greater service to others than to show that you believe in them, and you certainly will never have any influence over them unless you do believe in them. We tend to become in the main what our friends believe we are capable of becoming. So think out the meaning of the Cross in this light, saturate yourself with this idea and belief in the love of God and in the

ultimate goodness of human nature. Don't listen to the cynic and the croaker and the pessimist, they profess to face facts, but they do nothing of the kind : they shut their eyes to the supreme fact of all, that deep down in the heart of every man is the consciousness that goodness is goodness and not evil, and that the appeal of goodness finds a response in his heart, which, though he may not be able to account for it, is a fact which he cannot and does not wish to deny.

But there is also the other side. In the Cross of Christ we see, as we can see nowhere else, the reality of sin and its hideous consequences, for the Cross faces all the facts of life, love and sacrifice, hatred and selfishness, the generosity of giving and the meanness of getting.

CHAPTER VIII

THE REALITY OF SIN

THE Cross reveals to us the reality of sin in the only way in which we can fully realize it, and that is in the light of sheer goodness.

Sin, from the Christian point of view is, as we have seen, that which separates man from God. It is seeing things not from God's point of view but our own; thinking our own thoughts rather than God's; having our own values rather than accepting His; living, desiring, willing, acting, not in co-operation with, but independently of Him. It would be a mistake to imagine, as we often do, that the people who crucified Christ were at all exceptionally bad or mean or cruel or short-sighted. They were probably typical of any ordinary crowd of men of any time. Fear was, no doubt as it is to-day, the chief cause of their resentment and hatred of our Lord. They were horribly afraid of Him. They realized that He was in a very real sense a revolutionary. They could see that if His teaching were taken up by the people—as at one time it looked as if it might be—it would mean a tremendous upheaval of the present ordering of Society. It was really “very natural,” as we say, for those responsible for government in Church and State to be apprehensive. No doubt they realized

that if Jesus succeeded they might lose their jobs—and nobody looks upon that prospect with equanimity. Again, jealousy of Him and of His obvious power and popularity aroused their animosity towards Him, and combined with that there was a very natural conservatism, always resentful of any new ideas, especially of a drastic kind. Other forces were also at play, and possibly in Judas disappointed hopes, self-seeking, and an obsession of the fear of poverty; in Pilate real weakness of will-power and moral courage; he knew on his own confession that the priests and people were all wrong, but he had not the pluck to stand by his guns. But the point for us to remember is that all these “very natural” weaknesses of human nature led, as a fact, to the crucifixion of our Lord, to the “downing” of perfect goodness, to that which to-day would be admitted by everyone as the greatest and most ghastly tragedy in the history of the world. There is need to remember this fact to-day. The pendulum has swung back from the teaching about sin and its consequences prevalent fifty or more years ago. No doubt that teaching was out of proportion to the rest of the Christian message, but there was real truth in it. We have given up troubling much, if at all, about hell, and consequently the whole tendency is now to make light of sin; it is certainly pleasanter to do so, but we shall make a fatal mistake for ourselves and others if we do not face the fact of sin and call it by its proper name. “All sin is of a piece”; it separates from God, either by wilful rejection or mere ignorance. And separation from God means separation from the

one source of life, and that means death, not only physically but intellectually, morally, and spiritually. Therefore all forms of sin are serious, the grosser sins of the flesh, due to the selfish desire to yield to our natural sexual instincts under conditions other than those laid down by God ; or the lack of control of our natural appetites for food or drink or rest or sleep, or the lust for riches, or the exaggerated self-regard and fear which lead to jealousy of others, or conceit or pride of place or position producing an arrogant and overbearing spirit, and disregard for the dignity and value and rights of others. All involve separation from God, for all are forms of selfishness, and therefore of disobedience to His supreme law of love ; for love is the very antithesis of self. Most forms of sin cause suffering to innocent persons, and, if unrepented and unchecked, bring that final separation from God which is spiritual death. The trouble is, that taken separately the ordinary sins and failures of which we are constantly guilty do not seem serious, partly because they are so common, and partly because their consequences are not immediately obvious. We are, in fact, in danger of taking the same sort of view—especially of our own sins and failures—which the man who went to insure his life took of the illnesses by which his parents had died. When asked by the insurance company what they had died of, his answer was, “Oh, I can’t remember, but anyway it was nothing very serious” ! Whatever it was it had been serious enough to kill them !

We shall never be able to teach others the reality and seriousness of sin unless we have realized it our-

selves in our own lives, and that we shall never do except in the light of the Cross of Christ. There we see what it really means, and its utter hideousness. It is only as we come to see the love and goodness of God made manifest in Christ upon the Cross that we shall realize our own meanness, and the hideousness of sin and its consequences, and hate it. To point out their sins and failures to other people is no doubt very tempting, for it gives you a pleasing sense of your own superiority! But it is not the way to get others to see their faults. The only way to do so is to hold up before them the beauty and attractiveness of sheer goodness, and to show them that we really believe in their capacity for responding to the best, and not merely to the worst, that is in them.

That is our Lord's method, that is how God treats us. It is just His appeal to us of sheer love and goodness that makes us see ourselves as we really are. When that happens the one thing we long for is that the past shall be wiped out, forgiven and forgotten; and once we really want forgiveness God comes and meets us far more than half-way and welcomes us back to the home again. There is no waiting, no throwing our past in our teeth, no bargaining as to the future. God is too big for that. "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

And with forgiveness comes healing; for once we really turn to God by an act of deliberate will, once by our act of faith we trust ourselves to Him, the connection is restored, the two terminals, as it were, are joined up, the current of fresh life flows in

from the great power-station above us—God Himself, the source of all life and health or salvation (which means the same thing) and wholeness and holiness. That is the message which the Cross brings us—the message of the whole life of the Incarnate Son of God—the message of the possibility of becoming new and changed creatures through response to the love of God, through hatred of sin, through forgiveness of sin, through the life-blood of Jesus given and poured out for us and flowing into us, and bringing with it the very essence of all true life from the fountain source. The expression, “saved by the precious blood of Jesus” is not merely a pious sentiment, without any real and practical meaning: it is literally true, and experience proves it. We are saved, made whole and healthy, by God removing the obstacles which sin has built up between ourselves and Him. That is what we mean by forgiveness; by it our sin is wiped out and washed away. The channels of communication between ourselves and God, the source of all life, are cleared, and the life, the love, the power of God (which are always going out from Him) can freely flow into us. This is what “saved by the precious blood of Jesus” really means. To the Jew the blood signified the life. In Jewish sacrifices the blood of the beast sacrificed signified the life, which was offered to God; the Jew therefore was forbidden to drink the blood, though he was allowed to eat the flesh of the beast. It is significant that this belief that in some real sense the essence of life is in the blood has in recent years been confirmed by medical science through the

practice of blood-transfusion—that is, by drawing blood away from a healthy person and transfusing it into the veins of a sick person, thereby restoring him to health.

So, then, the forgiveness of sin is an indispensable pre-requisite of renewal of life. “Son, thy sins are forgiven thee,”—that first, and then immediately comes the command, “Arise, take up thy bed and walk.” By forgiveness of our sins that separation caused by sin from God, the source of life, is done away with, and we are made once again “at-one” with God, the connection is restored and the life renewed from the one source, God Himself.

But, as we have already seen, God can only forgive if we really want forgiveness. In this, as in all else, He treats us as He made us, free and responsible creatures. He will not force His forgiveness upon us against our own wills. God on His side is always ready and longing to forgive, but before He can do so He must have our co-operation in our desire for forgiveness, for that is the fundamental law of human life, dependence upon and co-operation with God.

It is this belief in God's willingness and power to forgive and remake human nature that we must make our own if we would ever convince anyone else of its truth, and we can only make it our own by a definite act of faith; we must act as if it were true, and then we shall find it really is true. We shall then meet with confidence that very prevalent belief that you cannot alter human nature. I remember years ago as a boy at school hearing a preacher give expression to this profound

sentiment ! “Human nature,” he said, “is human nature, and so long as human nature continues to be human nature, human nature will be human nature still.” And yet facts are all against this theory. Human nature is always being changed. We know it in ourselves and in others, it is never static, it is always moving in one direction or the other, becoming better or worse. The Christian belief—a belief founded not merely on theory but on experience—is that through the Cross of Christ human nature has been, and is still being, changed for the better ; that in and through our blessed Lord men and women have become and are still becoming “new creatures.” The change effected is a radical one. Their whole outlook on life, its meaning and its purpose, their idea of God, of themselves, of their fellow-men, and of every relationship in life, is for them changed. And that is what goodness according to our Lord really means. To be a Christian does not merely consist, as many think, in not doing this and not doing that, not getting drunk or stealing, or committing adultery or losing your temper ; it is not a negative but a positive thing. It consists in realizing your right relationship to God, and to your fellow-men—the relationship of love, fellowship, service, dependence upon and co-operation with God and one another. It is being remade, reborn, in a perfectly real sense, “a new creature” in Christ.

Whether that will ever happen to us depends upon ourselves. God cannot change human nature as we know it to-day into what He means it to be, cannot remake us new creatures, unless we are pre-

pared to make that venture of faith in Christ which is necessary. We must give Christ His chance with us. And that is the question for us to face. Are we prepared to do so? That was the question that Saul of Tarsus found himself right up against on the road to Damascus, and surely not for the first time; but until that moment he had done his best to shirk coming to grips with it, he had tried to dodge it, but "the Hound of Heaven" had been on his track, and at last he knew he could no longer escape. The appeal of Christ at last got home and touched that in him (which is in every man) which could not help responding. He surrendered "hands up" to Jesus—"I am your man." "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"—and from that moment life was changed and so was he.

CHAPTER IX

THE CROSS—AND AFTER

TAKEN by itself the first Good Friday is the symbol of the most miserable failure in history. Here was the end of the greatest Reformer the world has ever seen ; this is what all His stupendous claims of oneness with God and of universal sovereignty over the world had come to, a thoroughly unromantic death with two commonplace criminals on the Cross ; despised and rejected of men, denied and deserted by His own little band of followers who had sworn to be loyal to Him even to death. The only people left to stand by Him and own Him were His mother and a couple of women, and one disciple who, after running away with the rest, had thought better of it, and had come back to watch the end. It is impossible to imagine anything more utterly hopeless, and yet, the fact remains that Calvary was not the end. Taken in conjunction with what followed, that which on the face of it was the most miserable of failures and defeats has been proved the most glorious of all victories.

And what did follow ? The facts of the Resurrection, the Ascension, the coming of the Holy Spirit on the first Whit-Sunday, the effect of those mysterious happenings on that little discredited

crowd of men and women, and the subsequent history, all down the centuries until to-day, of that faith which Jesus had proclaimed. The Cross on Calvary does not stand alone: it is part of the whole of God's plan for the remaking of a broken and a shattered world. Indeed "If," as St Paul says, "Christ be not risen" (that is to say, if Good Friday is the end), "then is our preaching vain"—there is nothing in the Christian message which we are out to give to the world—"and your faith is also vain," there is nothing in it, it is all a hopeless delusion, for the idea that love and goodness, and not evil, is ultimately supreme is simply not true.

If I find it difficult to believe that Jesus did really rise from the dead, all I know is that I find it infinitely more difficult to believe that evil and not good is ultimately supreme in the world; that the devil, and not God, is the ultimate ruler of man's destiny; that self-seeking, meanness, jealousy, hatred, and money-grubbing are the qualities which really go to make human nature perfect and complete; that the really great men of history are your Judases, Pilates, Herods, and High Priests. I find it infinitely more difficult to believe that, or that the whole superstructure of Christianity for over nineteen centuries has been built up on either a trick of a charlatan or the delusions of a few neurotic women or overstrained and nervy men. What ordinarily sane man could accept such stuff as truth? The fact is, that men may try, as they have continually tried, to discredit the Christian belief in the fact of the Resurrection, but they can only do so by ignoring other facts which refuse to

be ignored. The fact of the Resurrection is the corner-stone of the Christian faith. It is not only for us the assurance that goodness and not evil is ultimately supreme in the world, and that therefore nothing really matters except to try to do and be the right thing at all costs, and to realize that however futile our efforts may be, yet on the side of goodness we are the winning side every time. The fact of the Resurrection is all this, but something more. The Resurrection is the assurance that the true life of each one of us (just because we are an integral part of that humanity which the Son of God took upon Himself) is, through union with Christ, the risen and victorious life. That is God's plan for human nature. That is what it is meant to be, and in union with Christ that risen life can be ours here and now. The way to that risen life is the same way which Christ trod, the way of the Cross, the way of dying to self in order that we may live with God and for God. The Cross is the gate to the risen life.

So it is with those strange happenings on the first Whit-Sunday, the coming of the Holy Spirit. Plain facts must be faced. What had our Lord told His disciples? He had again and again warned them that from the world's point of view His mission was going to end in apparent failure. So it did. He had again and again told them that what would appear to be the end would in reality be only the beginning of a new era in their own lives and in the life of the world: that He, as they knew Him in the flesh, would before many days were out be no longer visibly with them. That would not mean

that He had either deserted them or had given up His task of ultimately redeeming the whole world from sin and bringing man back to God. The same work which He had begun here on earth He would carry on through them in the light and power of the Holy Spirit, whom He would send to them after He Himself had left the earth. He told them to wait until the Holy Spirit came, until they had received power from on high, and then they were to go out and be His witnesses and carry on His work, in His Name, and in His Spirit. And what happened? After the Ascension they waited as the Master had told them, and in due course His promise was fulfilled.

As we read that strange account of the coming of the Holy Spirit on that first Whit-Sunday I suppose all of us ask ourselves again and again—what on earth does it really mean? What happened? Is it true? And we remember the explanation which the people at the time gave of it. Oh, they said, these men are just drunk: that is why they are talking all this gibberish and behaving in such a ridiculous way; after all, we have often seen this sort of thing before. No, said St Peter, with some sense of humour surely, that explanation won't do; it's too early in the day for people to get as drunk as you evidently think we are. The real explanation of all this is something very different; the fact is, that this is exactly what our own prophets and teachers of old foretold, and what the Master Himself promised would happen if only we did what He told us, and we did it: we waited and hoped and prayed and the Spirit has come, as He promised He would.

You can no more reasonably take Calvary by itself apart from the Resurrection than you can take the Ascension and Whit-Sunday apart from the practical results of those strange happenings at Pentecost on the people immediately concerned, and on their subsequent lives and characters, nor can you isolate those facts from the subsequent history of the Church of Christ.

Here was a little group of very ordinary men who had a few weeks before shown in a remarkable way some of the weakest and meanest traits of human character—and then? Why, they went out from that upper room changed men, conscious themselves of a leadership and light and a power with them and within them which they had never known before. From being a broken, discredited little band of shamefaced men they went out conscious of a unity amongst themselves, under a leadership which they could implicitly trust. Had not the Master promised that the Holy Spirit would stand by them and lead them? That they could call Him to their aid at all times and in all places—the Advocate, the Comforter—and that He would guide them into all truth? And so it was. Now in the light of that leadership their eyes were open—they saw, they knew, they understood—and so much in the Master's teaching had been so terribly difficult to understand before, now it was clear. They could now go out and give His message, not only with a new conviction of its truth and meaning, but with a new consciousness of power which they knew was not their own but His. So out they went, confident, assured, certain that whatever came their

way of joy or sorrow, success or failure, life or death—nothing mattered, for within them they had a power which could make them equal to every task. And this power and spirit, this light and leadership, was theirs for time and eternity; day by day, through oneness or communion with the risen Christ, His risen and victorious life was theirs if only they had faith in Him just to try their best to do what He told them. And it was not long after, remember, that it was said of this little crowd of very ordinary men, with no advantages of wealth, or place, or position, that “they had turned the world upside down?” and the people who said this were not their special admirers, but the very folk who were most opposed to them and their message.

These are facts, simple facts of history. They cannot be explained away: they must be accounted for—and how? For my part I cannot account for them except on the assumption that the belief held by these men themselves, and held ever since by the Church of Christ, is a true belief, that this stupendous change was a supernatural change, that it was brought about by the fulfilment of Christ’s promise that He would send the Holy Spirit to carry on His work of redemption through those who gave themselves up to Him, His purpose, His service, and His love. That is why we speak of the Church as the Body of Christ—the instrument through which the Holy Spirit carries on Christ’s work of redemption.

In the next chapter we shall be considering this idea of the Church as “the extension,” as it is sometimes called, “of the Incarnation.” Before doing so it will, I think, help us to understand this

idea better if we try to get clear in our minds the principle underlying the Incarnation, which is called technically the Sacramental System. What does it mean? Is it reasonable? Is it consonant with our own ordinary experience?

The Sacramental System means that what we call the inward, unseen, and spiritual is expressed and made real to us men by means of, and in combination with, what we call the material. When the fullness of time had come God chose the instrument of a human body through which to express and make real, and so to make known, to man what He was and what He was like. In Chapter IV we saw how the first disciples came to their idea of God through coming to know Jesus as they came to know any other fellow-man. They came to know Him as the kindest, strongest, most courageous, most patient, and most self-sacrificing person they had ever met. How? Through the way He expressed Himself—His personality—through His face and expression, His words, and His actions. He Himself, His Spirit, became manifest to them in and through His material body made up of flesh and bones and blood.

Now that is the only way we human beings are known to each other; we express ourselves through the medium of our bodies, and our bodies are what we call material. It is literally true, as we say, that "we give ourselves away by our faces"; our love for others is expressed by our words and our actions towards them, so is our anger or hatred. If you lose your temper and hit a man on the nose, it makes it evident that you do not feel particularly

amiable towards him. And when later you come to your senses and realize that you have behaved abominably, you do not lecture your fist and tell it that it has behaved abominably in hitting the man on the nose, but you say, "*I* have behaved abominably," for the fist was only the instrument by which you expressed your lack of self-control and your inward disposition to the man you hit.

Thought is a spiritual activity, yet the power to think at all is dependent upon a brain to think with ; that brain in turn is dependent upon a due supply of blood ; but any chemist can take a spot of that blood and reduce it to its chemical component parts, and so it would be true to say that the most spiritual thought of God, which any man is capable of thinking, is, in the last resort, dependent upon a material thing.

Think of the way that through nature, literature, music, painting, sculpture, and architecture we receive through our senses of sight and hearing what we should all describe as a real spiritual experience of beauty ; though if a chemist analysed a Raphael picture of the Madonna and Child, he could only analyse the paint and the canvas of which it is composed : the analysis of the material would get you no nearer to the appreciation of the beauty of that picture. So with a sonata of Beethoven played on the violin. It is perfectly true to say that the spiritual effect on the listener has been produced through a man scraping some dead hair of a dead horse over the dead insides of a dead cat stretched over some dead wood, but I doubt if that would be an adequate description of the spiritual experience of hearing that sonata played on the violin.

When you take your hat off to a lady in the street, by that outward act you express your sense of respect to the other sex. When you write a letter to a friend you express yourself through the medium of writing, which involves pen, ink, and paper. A cheque in itself is nothing, but if there is money in your account at the bank representing the sum indicated on the cheque, that little bit of paper with your signature on it is as good as the fifty golden sovereigns which it represents. The left-hand handshake of the scout or guide is an outward and visible sign of an inward spirit of fellowship. The Union Jack—a bit of common coloured bunting—is again an outward and visible sign of an inward spirit, the spirit of loyalty to king and country.

And all these facts of ordinary everyday experience show us that the principle underlying the Incarnation is just the principle underlying all human life: the inward and spiritual being expressed and made real through the outward and visible and material. So we find our Lord in His teaching making use of this sacramental principle; He taught from the known to the unknown, from the natural to the spiritual; He taught in parables; He spoke of the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, and of ordinary everyday things like salt, and leaven, and light. Finally, in order to sum up His teaching in a way which His disciples would remember, He took the three commonest elements of human life at the time, water, bread, and wine, and set them apart or consecrated them to be the means by which men, women and children should

become members of His Body the Church, and be kept alive as members of that Body through partaking of Himself, the Head of the Church and the Life of the Body—His Spirit, His life, His love, and His power.

Christian sacraments, therefore, are not, as many would have us think, arbitrary enactments, but are wholly consonant with our own ordinary human experience of things spiritual.

CHAPTER X

THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF THE CHURCH

THE Christian idea of the human race is that it is meant to be one family under one Father—God; one corporate unity, “of one blood,” a divinely created organism, not a humanly created organization. The Christian belief is, first, that this one corporate unity, taken as a whole, has gone wrong by getting out of its right relationship to God. This getting out and keeping out of right relationship the Christian calls sin. Secondly, that the Incarnation was God’s plan for getting the human race—this corporate unity—back into right relationship to God. That is what the Christian calls Redemption. Thirdly, that the Church is the extension of the Incarnation—that is to say, God’s plan for carrying on Christ’s work of redemption. So we find St Paul speaking of the Church as “the Body of Christ.” His human body was, when on earth, the instrument through which our Lord made Himself known to the people of His time. To St Paul the Church or Body of Christ, of which human beings were members, was the nucleus of the new human race sprung from Christ. So he calls our Lord “the second Adam”—that is to say, the original stock of this new human race, just as we speak of the first Adam as the original stock of the old human

race. Those who become "members of Christ," as the Catechism calls baptized persons, become "new creatures" in becoming members of the new human race. This nucleus, "in the world but not of it," was to be as leaven gradually leavening the whole lump of the old human race, with its special characteristics—the true principles of human life—of fellowship, service, and dependence upon and co-operation with God, until the whole human race was brought back into right relationship with Him.

The Christian faith is that our Lord Himself founded or created His Church—that is to say, that the Church of Christ is not, as some would still have us believe, merely a man-made organization or society, such as any political, social, or industrial organization or society would be. It is no more a man-made organization than is the human body or the human race. The Church is not a human organization, but a divine organism. It was into this divine organism that our Lord, we believe, definitely called certain persons to be the nucleus of His Body the Church. He gathered round Him certain folk who of their own free will desired to be one with Him, to identify themselves with His life, His principles, and His purpose for the world. These He taught and trained in the three great principles or laws of God governing all human life, fellowship, service, and dependence upon and co-operation with Himself—as God. This embryonic body became alive, a spiritual body, on the first Whit-Sunday, when the promise of Christ was fulfilled and the Holy Spirit came. That is why we

speak of Whit-Sunday as the "birthday of the Church."

This nucleus of the Body of Christ on earth was to go forth into the world and win others to Him; the Son of God became incarnate and took our nature upon Him, not for His own sake, but for the sake of others, that He might win men back to God; so it is that the Church of Christ is essentially a missionary body. It exists not merely for those within it, but always and everywhere primarily for those outside it, to bring them in, until the whole old human race is perfectly leavened and becomes the new human race in Christ.

Our Lord's orders to His immediate disciples were to go out and preach, proclaim, and teach to all the world His Gospel, or Good News, of this new life which they had received from Him, and to baptize with water in the threefold name of the Blessed Trinity those who were ready to receive it. From the very beginning of the history of the Church we find that these orders with regard to baptism were carried out. It was the outward and visible sign of that inward and invisible and spiritual grace (and grace means free gift) given by God by which the individual was incorporated into, born into, the Body of Christ—this new human race. The Church Catechism puts it thus: ". . . wherein (*i.e.*, in Baptism) I was made a member of Christ, the child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven."

This description of what happens to a child or an adult when they are baptized is in reality an exact parallel of what happens to any babe at the moment

of natural birth. At the moment of our birth three things happened. First, we became a member of the human race—a human being; before that moment we had no separate existence apart from our mother. So at the moment of baptism we believe that a person becomes a member of Christ—that is to say, a member of the new human race of which the incarnate Son of God was the original stock. Secondly, at birth a relationship was set up between ourselves and our parents, and through them to all their relations, who automatically become ours; we became a member of the family. So we believe that by baptism, through union with Christ, as a member of His Body, we are brought back into right relationship with God the Father, as His children and partners. Thirdly, at the moment of birth we become “citizens of the State” in which we are born, so that we “inherit” as by right the privileges of such citizenship, the protection of its law. If as infants we are ill-treated or insufficiently cared for by those responsible for us, the force of the State, if necessary, is put at our disposal. So we believe that at baptism we become “inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven,” we inherit the rights and duties of citizens of the Kingdom and the care and protection of the King of kings.

This very real analogy is worth careful thought—it will, I believe, help us to understand better the real meaning of the Sacrament of Baptism. It will help us to see that what primarily counts is what God does for us, though in everything He leaves us something to do for ourselves, because He always treats us as free partners. The

Sacrament of Baptism is the assurance to us of the reality of God's gift of new life given to us, though, again on this same principle of partnership, that gift, like all God's gifts, must be used by us in order that it may become effectual in us. For what happened to us at birth? We did not make ourselves alive, we were given life through the instrumentality of our parents, but the gift of natural life so given has had to be used by us, sustained from day to day, and developed by the exercise of our faculties.

So, again, with that question of infant baptism which to many is such a real difficulty. Assuming that this belief about baptism is true, I cannot understand why it is more difficult to believe that God can give us a new life, a fresh start, at baptism than it is to believe that He could give us life originally at birth. Besides, while we are infants, unable to think or act for ourselves, we are dependent upon our parents for doing the thinking and acting for us, in such a way as they believe will be best for us; then why not with regard to this incorporation into the Body of Christ? It seems to me entirely consonant with my experience of life generally; it is indeed exactly what I should expect would happen.

Then what about Confirmation? It is called the completion of the Sacrament of Baptism. What does this mean? Here, again, I believe we shall be helped to understand what confirmation means as the completion of what happens at baptism, by considering what happens in the natural sphere. At birth we are given the gift of life (whether we

like it or not, and indeed without any reference to ourselves !); that gift in a normal babe contains in itself the capacity to fulfil the functions in due course of full manhood or womanhood, but until maturity is reached those capacities are latent and only potential, at maturity they became actual.

By confirmation we believe that we who at baptism received the gift of this new life, receive the further gift of the Holy Spirit by which we are enabled to discharge (if we use that gift aright) the full responsibilities of mature Christian manhood and womanhood, as members of the Body of Christ. Confirmation for this reason is sometimes called "The Ordination of the Laity." Through it the ordinary lay members of the Church are endowed with the gift of the Holy Spirit to enable them to fulfil their special function in the body; just as at ordination we believe certain members of the body are endowed with the special gift of the Holy Spirit for the regular ministry of the Church.

And that brings us to the question of the ministry. If the Church of Christ is a living divine organism provision must be made, as in the human organism, for uniting, directing, and feeding the body. This is exactly what we believe God has provided for in what we call the ministry. The first members of that ministry, the Apostles, were chosen and trained for their special work, and then commissioned by Christ Himself. "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." And when He had said this He "breathed on them and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whose-

soever sins ye retain they are retained" (St John xx. 21-23). "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (St Mark xvi. 15). "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you"; and then follows the promise, "and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (St Matt. xxviii. 19, 20).

The Acts of the Apostles is the earliest extant history of the Christian Church that we possess. From that history it is quite clear that the Apostles were recognized by the whole company of believers as those members of the body whom our Lord had specially endowed and commissioned to perform the functions of directing and feeding the body. From the very first, immediately after Pentecost, we are told that "they (that is the baptized) continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine (that is, their teaching of the faith of Christ) and fellowship (under their leadership), and in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers" (Acts ii. 42).

The Apostles, then, were recognized as the guardians and teachers of the faith, the dispensers of the sacraments, the centre of unity of the one fellowship, responsible for the direction of its work. As the Church grew and new groups of baptized believers came into being in different places, we find the Apostles appointing elders to lead and teach and preside; and when "the business side" of the Church at Jerusalem had grown so much that it got beyond the powers of the

Apostles to attend to it without neglecting their special work, after consulting the laity they appointed seven men to be "over this business" (later known as deacons), "but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word" (Acts vi. 1-4).

Later we find, just as we should expect to find, that as the Church grew and the Apostles themselves advanced in years they made provision for carrying on the ministry after their death. So far only those who had been directly commissioned or ordained by the Apostles themselves were recognized by the whole company of believers as duly appointed elders or presbyters (or "priests," a shortened form of "presbyter," as they were later called) and deacons. So it was that we find overseers or bishops being appointed, with the special functions of ordaining or commissioning others, in order to carry on the ministry of the Church as essential to the good ordering, unity, and health of the body—"stewards of the mysteries of God."

By about A.D. 100 we find that these three orders of ministers are the recognized regular ministry of the Church, and that two things are clear—first, that no one took this "honour unto himself but he that was called of God" (Hebrews v. 4), and had received his authority from the Apostles or from those specially commissioned or ordained by the Apostles with power to send and ordain; secondly, that such ministers, and only such, were recognized as ministers by the Church.

This is what is known as the doctrine of Apostolic Succession. Whatever else it is, it is certainly

based on sound common sense. If, as I have maintained, the idea of the Church of Christ as a divine organism is the true one, then obviously God means it to be one. Our Lord clearly foresaw the possibility of divisions in His Church, for in that great prayer of His (St John xvii.) He prayed especially that its unity might be preserved, and continue to be preserved. But common sense tells us that if a society with many branches scattered all over the world is to be united, and continue to be united, there must be some principle of unity and some guarantee for the continuity of that unity. The one faith must be guarded, expounded, and taught by some authority recognized as competent by all the constituent members of that society or body. The order and discipline of the society must also be under one authority accepted by all. Further, as the human holders of these offices of guardians, teachers, and rulers pass on to the life beyond there must be some method recognized and accepted by all by which their successors may be appointed. Such a method was, I believe, provided for in the regular ministry of the Church of Christ. In the Apostles first, and afterwards in the bishops, this principle of unity and this guarantee of its continuity is found.

I am well aware that it is impossible for anyone to attempt to deal adequately with such a subject in a few pages—that, of course, applies equally to the rest of the subjects dealt with in this book. All that I have attempted to do is to give in barest outline the main lines of the idea of the Christian

ministry held by that branch of the Catholic Church to which I belong. I believe the idea is true and full of ordinary common sense—which incidentally is, I suppose, the rarest sort of “sense” there is. There are many, of course, who do not accept this account of the Christian ministry. They maintain that God has, as a fact, abundantly blessed the ministry of those who have not received their commission as ministers in this way. That, no doubt, is a fact. I should be the last to deny it. But there is another undeniable fact. The Church of Christ as we know it to-day is not one in the sense that our Lord prayed that it might continue to be, and indeed was one for many centuries. Has not the disregard of this principle of unity in the early Church had something to do with our present unhappy divisions? I believe it has been probably one of the main causes of the present trouble, and that in any scheme of reunion we shall find that, whatever our theories may be as to Apostolic Succession, we shall be forced to go back to the principle underlying that idea.

CHAPTER XI

THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF PRAYER

THE Church, then, is the Body of Christ, a divine organism, One and Catholic, *i.e.*, universal, made up of men, women, and children of all nations and races, all animated with the spirit of Christ and fulfilling their special functions, with its regular ministry directing, ruling, teaching, and feeding the body.

This body is the instrument through which our Lord wills to carry on His work of redemption, proclaiming the truth, teaching the laws of God, which govern human life, namely, fellowship, service, and dependence upon and co-operation with God, and demonstrating these principles in everyday life, in order to win the world to recognize that only in obedience to them can men realize their true selves. The Church, in other words, is the whole company of baptized persons manifesting in their everyday lives, individually and corporately, the spirit of Christ, that same spirit which He manifested on earth through His human body. The Church is, as our Lord told us, to be light to guide men to the truth; it is to be leaven, gradually leavening the whole lump of the human race with the spirit of love and fellowship; it is to be salt, preserving the human race

from rotting away through the poison of selfishness—individual, social, and national.

How is this to be done? By every member of the body keeping in direct communication with the head and heart and life of the body, which is Christ, just as in the human body every life-cell of the body is kept alive, sustained and strengthened by the life-blood passed into them continually through the action of the heart. Our Lord teaches us this in the parable of the vine and the branches (St John xv.). This is a picture of what we Christians call prayer, or communion with God, in all its various forms. It is making and keeping contact with those unseen spiritual forces which are the essence of all true life, physical and spiritual: those forces which God, the source of all life, is ever giving out to us men for our richer and fuller life—through prayer and sacrament and co-operation with Him.

The Christian religion is not merely a philosophy of life, or a moral code. Jesus came not only to show us the way of living according to God's plan, by revealing to us the truth about God and ourselves, but also to give us the power to live this life. He Himself is the life. It is not enough, then, to know that we *ought* to be good, but we must know *how* to be good. This was the amazing discovery which the first disciples made. "I can do all things," says St Paul, "through Christ that strengtheneth me." And this was not the boast of a braggart, but simply a fact of his own experience. To him "the Kingdom of God" was "not in word but in power." For

him it was not a question, as it is again and again for us to-day, "I know I ought, but how can I?" But "I know I ought and I know I can." By faithful obedience to what our Lord commands, these men found, as Christians ever since have found, that they could, through prayer and sacrament, get the power to make them equal to every task.

That is the very heart of the Christian religion: that is the real gospel or good news: that is the message which men want to-day, and that is the truth we Christians are commissioned by baptism and confirmation to go out and proclaim to the world, and to demonstrate in our own lives. It is a message of good news; for it is not the circumstances of life which are the real trouble, it is the feeling that they are too much for us, that the struggle against temptation is a hopeless one. But to be up against a difficult situation, with the certain confidence within you that you have the power to meet it and overcome it, that is an entirely different thing: that makes life worth living. This sense of confidence, through the casting out of all fear, is the fruit of prayer and communion with God. It is no make-believe confidence, for it has been tested by the hard facts of practical experience and not found wanting. To this experience Christian men and women bear their testimony all down the ages.

What, then, is this thing we call Prayer, and how can we learn it? It is a science and an art. A science to be studied and an art to be learnt and practised, for it is only by doing it that you will learn it. The rationale or theory of Christian

prayer is based on the two fundamental beliefs of the Christian faith. We have referred to them frequently in the preceding pages ; first, that God is Love, and, secondly, that man is free, a free agent and not a machine, a son and not a slave. "God is Love" means that all the time God is giving Himself out to us, whom He loves. "Man is free" means that he is free to accept or to reject what God gives him, the gift of Himself. This law of God giving, and man receiving, is the fundamental law governing all human life, and this making and keeping contact with God through personal intercourse with Him, the supreme personality, is what we mean by prayer : a personal intercourse of son with father, friend with friend, fellow-workers and partners together. It is placing ourselves directly under His personal influence ; it is getting into line with Him, in heart, mind, and will ; it is opening ourselves up to Him, so that He Himself, His love, His life, and His light may flow into us and become part of us. Thus God Himself reinforces the "I" in us with those spiritual forces which we need in order to live in Christ's way, and so to make our complete contribution as members of His body to the health and happiness and work of the whole.

But how are we to get into line with God ? First, we must really believe that prayer is an essential part of our daily work. We shall not believe this unless we really want the power which prayer can give, and we shall only want this in proportion as we really want to be like our Lord and to desire that which He desires. So if we

have not got this desire we had better pray for it at once.

Behind all effective prayer there must be the resolute will to stimulate and develop that capacity to respond to the highest and the best which has been planted in each of us by God. This we shall only do by deliberately putting ourselves under the spell of sheer goodness and love as revealed in our Lord and reflected in some measure in all good people.

For anyone who seriously aims at living on Christ's plan nothing can, I believe, take the place of the knowledge of the Bible—God's Word—the record of His gradual revelation of Himself in history, and more especially, and certainly to begin with, the Gospels. Not merely to read, but to reflect upon our reading; to try to visualize our Lord living His life to-day under the same circumstances as we have to live ours; "listening in" through the account of His life and teaching to what He has to say to us personally; and experience shows that He always has something special to say to ourselves. This is one method of making really intimate contact with Christ. We are putting ourselves directly under His personal influence; we get to know Him, and not merely about Him, and gradually we find ourselves more and more inspired by this contact with Him to desire what He desires, and then we discover the need of His Spirit and power.¹

¹ I would strongly recommend anyone who wishes to read the Bible in this way to join the "Bible Reading Fellowship." The subscription is 2s. 6d. per annum, and the Notes are published monthly, and can be obtained from S.P.C.K., Northumberland Avenue, London, W.C.2.

One of the things which we must learn to do if we are ever to be good "pray-ers" is to control and direct our thoughts. It is not an easy business, especially if we have never seriously practised the art early in life, but it can be done, although only by resolute effort and practice. Day by day we must learn deliberately to think right thoughts and to refuse to think wrong ones. This is one of the things which the daily reading of some passage of the Bible will help us to do : it will suggest to us right thoughts or suggestions, and it will help us to practise concentrating our minds upon them. It is for the same reason that it is of such practical importance that we should not expose ourselves to the influence of wrong suggestions through looking at bad pictures or reading bad books or engaging in unworthy conversation with others.

As an aid to this thought-control and concentration I have myself found it a real help to do the following sort of mental gymnastic exercise. I write a word in bold letters, such as peace, or confidence, or love, on a white card and I put it up in front of me, and for a definite time, say a minute to begin with, and longer later, I try to keep my eyes rigidly fixed on this word. Having got the word impressed on my mind I close my eyes and still try to see it. After having done that for a definite time I try to think of what it means, to think of somebody else expressing that word in action ; and then I try to think of some episode in our Lord's life which, *e.g.*, expresses that idea of love, or patience, or confidence, or whatever it is ; and, lastly, I try to see myself trying to express

in action that same idea. Personally I have found this sort of exercise a real help, and often go back to it. Of course you will find that your mind wanders, that immediately you try to think of one thing you will be thinking of a dozen other things! Never mind, the great thing is not to get fussed or worried: keep calm and quiet, and just gently bring your mind back to the thought on which you wish to concentrate. After a time you will begin to realize that you can control your thoughts and direct them at will, as you know you can control your feet or your hands.

Another very real help towards thought-control and concentration is the constant repetition of a good thought, a short text, or a definite healthy affirmation, such as "God knows me, loves me, needs me." This sounds so simple, and to some such nonsense, that many will never bring themselves to practise it; but M. Coué was not the first person to discover this power in the practice of auto-suggestion, by deliberately suggesting right thoughts through repetition of true statements. Try it—and go on trying it—and you will find it helps.

But there is something else which we must practise and learn, and that is the art of becoming receptive, and to do that we must learn to relax, to take off the strain in body and mind and be quiet. "Be still then and know that I am God." The Psalmist was right, and every great master in the art of prayer has borne his testimony to the need of learning to be quiet if you are ever to hear what God has to say to you, and to be in a position

to receive the Spirit which He is longing to give. And this, we have seen, was our Lord's own habit ; when He wanted to do this work of prayer He went away to some lonely spot where He could be quiet. Study, then, the art of relaxation, of taking the strain off every muscle of your body, and learn to be quiet in mind as well as in body : it can be learnt, but, again, only by deliberate practice.

Finally, if we would get into line with God, the source of all life, so that the Spirit and power which He is always giving us may be ours, we must identify our wills with His, we must be prepared to put Him first, and to give ourselves over to Him, as St Paul did on the road to Damascus, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ?" or as Isaiah said, "Here am I, send me." We must be prepared to give ourselves over to Him and trust Him absolutely, then, and then only, can He use each one of us completely as His instrument through which He will manifest His Spirit and life.

CHAPTER XII

THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

WE have seen that in order to become efficient "pray-ers" it is necessary that we should get clear in our minds what is the Christian or right idea of prayer; and thereby get rid of wrong ideas about it, such as that prayer is an attempt to change God's mind or to inform Him of what He already knows. That, of course, is absurd. Prayer is, in the sphere of the Spirit, obedience to one of the fundamental laws of our nature, which is dependence upon and co-operation with God.

But we have also seen that there are certain pre-requisites of effectual prayer—desire, thought-control and direction, receptivity, quietness, and, first and last, faith, or the giving of ourselves over in complete trust to God. These we must deliberately set ourselves to study and learn and practise. This cannot be done without giving time and hard persevering work to the business. But the Christian life is from start to finish a disciplined life, a life under orders, a life of continual learning, "for this is eternal life, to know Thee," or, as the more accurate translation of the word "to know" is, "the ever-increasing knowledge of the one true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

As we are reminded in the Baptismal Service, "Baptism doth represent unto us our profession": to play at the business of being a Christian, to be content, as many are, to be mere amateurs at it, is hopeless. So it is that if we would become good pray-ers we simply must give time to this work, and really work at it. A definite rule of life is absolutely essential. That is, we must so order our day that we have time to be quiet, to read and study our Bibles, to think and to be alone in personal intercourse with our Lord. The best time of the day for this work is in the morning, as soon as we are dressed and ready for the day's work. Our mind and body are rested after our night's sleep: we have the day before us when we shall need all the power we can get. To do this means getting out of bed early enough, good discipline in itself, because for most of us it is so abominably difficult! A rule of life, then, and a definite time for this work. How long? That each one of us must settle for himself, but if the "I" in us is more important than the body, it is as well to compare the time we spend on definitely feeding and reinforcing that "I" in us with the time we spend on feeding and washing and dressing and resting our bodies. If most of us are honest with ourselves in this comparison we shall have some food for serious thought; and we really must try to be honest.

Then come the questions, How are we to pray? and, What are we to pray for? Once more it is to our Lord that we must go for the answer to these questions. "Lord, teach us to pray"—and

His answer was The Lord's Prayer—"When ye pray, say Our Father . . ."

The Lord's Prayer is for us Christians the model of all prayer, both in its order and in its content.¹ The more closely we try to model our own prayers upon that prayer the more Christlike they will become, and therefore the more effective.

First, then, the order. It is extraordinarily unlike the order of our own prayers. Most of us, I suppose, are apt to begin by thinking about ourselves and our own special needs and desires, but this is exactly what our Lord tells us we are not to do. We are to begin not by thinking of ourselves or looking inward, but by thinking of God and looking upward—away from self to Him. First, we are to stop and think of God as He is, and as He has made Himself known to man, especially through the revelation of Himself in our Lord. To stop and think and contemplate God as infinitely above us, "in heaven," and yet near us on earth, as our Father, loving, understanding, sympathising, longing, as all good fathers must long, for the best for their children. To think of Him as He is. "Hallowed be Thy Name" (and the name stands for what a person is), infinitely great, loving, kind, patient, forgiving, beautiful, pure, trustworthy, and true; to think of Him, then, as we know Him in our Lord, as He has shown Himself to be to us men, to desire that all He stands for may be "hallowed"—that is, held as most worthy and

¹ For a fuller treatment of this subject I would refer the reader to a pamphlet entitled a *School of Prayer*, which I was asked to write in the series of *The Teaching Church Papers* (S.P.C.K., 6d.)

most holy ; honoured and loved and desired by ourselves and by all men, as that which is alone worthy of our desire and pursuit in life.

Then our Lord bids us pray that His " Kingdom may come," and His " will be done on earth as it is in heaven." That is a prayer, not merely for ourselves (indeed the whole of the Lord's Prayer is for others as well as for ourselves—" our," not " mine " ; " us," not " me "), but definitely for all men, a prayer of what we call " Intercession," on behalf of others, a prayer that all men may come to realize God's supreme law of love and live by it, and, in response to that love, surrender themselves in service to Him and their fellow-men.

Having looked away from self up to God, having thought of Him as He is, in all His goodness, beauty, and truth, having identified ourselves with His will and purpose for mankind—then, and then only, are we to ask anything for ourselves, and then as much for others as for ourselves. " Give us this day our daily bread "—give us what is necessary to enable us to be our best and so to make our fullest contribution of service to God and man ; give us what is necessary for the health and strength of our bodies, of our minds and of the " I " in each one of us ; sufficient food, clothing, warmth, right thoughts, and, above all, the spirit to enable us to be what God would have us be, in order that we may live together in love as members of His family. It is only then that our Lord bids us think of our sins and failures which block the inflow of His Spirit into our hearts, and having thought of them, to ask His forgiveness for them, that He may clear

the channels of communication. This forgiveness we may ask for only on two conditions : first, that we really want to be forgiven ; and secondly, that we are prepared to forgive as we ourselves hope to be forgiven.

Such, then, is the order which our prayers should take. They must begin with worship, with looking away from self up to God, that we may learn to appreciate in ever-increasing measure His amazing love and goodness, beauty and truth ; that the sense of wonder may grow in us. The essence of true worship is surely just that ; it is what we feel when we look at the starry heavens on a clear night, when we see a glorious sunset, a lovely picture, a perfect act of self-sacrificing love ; as the Psalmist said, " I opened my mouth and drew in my breath " ; he felt, as we feel, when no mere words can express our awe, wonder, and admiration.

" Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." That must be our attitude in worship ; we must begin our prayers by looking, and listening, waiting on God that He may impress upon us something of Himself ; that He may first speak to us rather than we to Him ; that He may first tell us what He wants of us, rather than that we should tell Him what we want of Him ; that He may give us our orders for the day. In order that we may both see when we look, and hear when we listen, we need the light of the Holy Spirit, for which we shall be wise to ask.

One very practical result of beginning our prayers with adoration and worship is that, when we really think of God as He is, we begin to under-

stand something of His love and patience with us. We understand how much we have to thank Him for. So adoration leads to thanksgiving. Like all virtues gratitude needs to be resolutely cultivated. It is so extraordinarily easy just to take all our good things for granted, as if they were ours by right, and never say a conscious "thank you" for them; health, strength, work, holidays, friends, books, pictures, music, all the lovely things of life—and then, when suddenly we find ourselves deprived of them, how easy it is to complain and to imagine that we are being badly treated!

The best way to cultivate a habit of gratitude is, first, by definitely asking God to make us grateful; secondly, by deliberately meditating upon God's goodness to us; and thirdly, by making it a rule to think more of those less fortunate than ourselves, and by saying "thank you" for those blessings of life which are renewed every morning. If you are having a bad time remember that many others are having a worse one. "Well, anyway you haven't got toothache!" was a favourite remark of one old friend of mine whenever he heard anyone "grouching." My experience certainly is that the happiest and best people are those who have most strongly cultivated the virtue of gratitude; the happiest, because they look for the best in life and see it, and the best, because they so fully appreciate their debt to God that life becomes to them one big opportunity for trying to pay back something of that debt. "We love Him because He first loved us"; gratitude is the main-spring and the only true motive of the Christian

life. Just in proportion as we feel thankful to God for His love to us, so shall we try to pay back that love in the only way in which love can be repaid—in loving service, the giving of ourselves to Him. So self-dedication, “Thy will be done,” naturally follows thanksgiving. We identify ourselves with God’s will and purpose for us and for all men, and daily offer ourselves afresh for the service of God.

So it is that the prayer, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,” becomes the very heart of all intercessory prayer. The one thing that really matters for us and for others is that we shall live fully, by being filled day by day with the Spirit of Christ. The beginning of all intercession, or prayer for others, is thinking right thoughts about them; wishing what is best for them; and quite the best we can wish for them is that they too may become like Christ by being filled with His Spirit. And intercession is for us Christians a duty; we owe it to others, to the whole family of the human race as our brethren. It is the best service we can render, for by our prayers we direct those great spiritual forces which God puts at our disposal towards them; we surround them with fresh reinforcements of light and love and power; we cannot force them upon them, any more than God can, but if a man is unwittingly walking in the dark by a path which leads over a precipice, and some friend throws an arc light before him, he sees his danger and can stop and retrace his steps. Or, again, as some of us know by experience, we have been honestly trying to fight against some

temptation—sloth, depression, impurity, or whatever it may be. The struggle seems hopeless, and we make no headway, till suddenly we feel an access of strength and power, fresh hope and confidence, and the whole outlook is changed. Why? Because some good friend has been praying for us, and through his prayer fresh reinforcements have been sent to our aid; we have used them, and defeat is turned into victory.

Study, then, this work of intercession, it's worth it, and work at it, and do it systematically, especially for anyone that you are definitely trying to influence and help for good. Further, intercession will inevitably stimulate the desire to do something for those for whom you pray. It is the experience of all of us that trying to help somebody else is the best way of helping ourselves. Many a father has pulled himself together and made a fresh start when he began to realize the effect his slackness and sin were having on the growing character of his child. Trying to help another makes you understand your own need of divine help.

So petition follows intercession, the seeking from God by personal contact with Him His own Spirit of light and love and life to make us equal to the task. What is it we especially need? That we discover by self-examination, which will reveal to us our need of forgiveness, and show us our weaknesses, and therefore our special needs. The best method of self-examination is a positive rather than a negative one: not, that is, by asking ourselves questions such as, "Have I been selfish, depressed, impatient,

impure ? ” and so on ; but by trying to see ourselves in the light of our Lord’s character as it is, for instance, summed up in 1 Corinthians xiii., or in the fruits of the spirit in Galatians iv. 22 and 23 ; and then thinking wherein we have come short of the Spirit of love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, sincerity, purity, and so on. All our sins and failures will be found to be due to the lack of these positive fruits of the spirit in us, and so our self-examination will not only lead to our desire for forgiveness, but also direct us to seek fresh supplies of the Spirit to make good our special needs. If you have been depressed, then seek for a fresh supply of the Spirit of joy and cheerfulness and thankfulness ; if you have been irritable, then ask for more patience ; ask, and just hold on, and let the power come in and fill your heart. The power will be given, and in the consciousness of that power you will go out to your day’s work, confident and assured.

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CHAPTER XIII

PUBLIC WORSHIP

IN the last two chapters we have been thinking of private prayer only, but the Christian life is, as we have seen, essentially a social life, to be lived in fellowship.

Being a Christian, then, implies certain obligations and duties to the Body of Christ, and the Christian belief is that it is only in fulfilling them that any individual member can ever develop his own individuality—that is to say, fulfil his full function in the body, and thereby become what God made him to be. And this is true first and foremost with regard to the most important part of our life—the life of prayer and communion with God. It is the third great principle or law governing all human life, the law of dependence upon and co-operation with God; and it is only by obedience to this law that we can obtain that Spirit of God, which makes it possible for us to obey the other two great laws—the law of fellowship and the law of service and self-sacrifice. Hence the vital importance of what we call public worship both to the individual and to the whole body corporate; and for this our Lord during His earthly ministry made provision.

He not only taught His disciples to pray when

He gave them and us the Lord's Prayer, but "on the same night when He was betrayed" He instituted what has come to be known by various names, such as the Lord's Supper, the Holy Communion, the Eucharist, the Holy Mysteries, the Blessed Sacrament. When He taught His disciples to pray He said, "When ye pray, *say* 'Our Father . . .'" ; when He instituted the Holy Communion He said, "*Do this—take—eat—drink—*" ; He left His Church something *to do* in remembrance of Him.

The Lord's Prayer is not only the model of all Christian prayer, but the summary in a few short sentences of those three great principles which our Lord came to teach, and by which He lived His own life on earth—fellowship, service, and dependence upon God. "Our Father"—fellowship in the family ; "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done"—the reign of law, the law of love which Christ has shown us means self-giving in service ; "Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses"—dependence upon God. Now what the Lord's Prayer sums up in words the Holy Communion expresses in action. First, it is the Sacrament—the outward and visible sign of unity in the fellowship of the body of Christ. Secondly, it is the Memorial, or setting forth (*a*) before God of the one supreme sacrifice of His life which our Lord made "for us men and for our salvation" ; (*b*) it is the setting before ourselves the one way of life worthy of our pursuit, the way of self-giving in service. Thirdly, it sets out in action the third great law of dependence

upon God. "This is My body": "this is My blood"—this is Myself—this is what I have given for you—your part is to take, eat and drink, for that no one can do for you: you must do it for yourself.

Just as the Blessed Sacrament expresses in action what the Lord's Prayer sums up in words, so in the service of Holy Communion we find the gathering up of all our own individual prayers in the fellowship of the whole body. First, our worship, adoration, and thanksgiving (hence the name Eucharist). Secondly, self-dedication, the offering "of ourselves, our souls and bodies," all we are and all we have to God in union with the one supreme sacrifice. Thirdly, intercession (in union with our Lord the great Interceder) in the offering of our prayers for all men for whom Christ died, and for whom He now "ever liveth to make intercession"; and, finally, forgiveness of our sins "through the precious blood of Jesus," and the strengthening and refreshing of our souls—our selves—the "I" in us—through doing what He told us, through taking, eating and drinking His body and blood—partaking of Himself, His Spirit, His life, love and power, so that He may become part of us, in order that we may go out and live His life and do His work, and help to win the whole world to Him.

How can these things be? How indeed? Who can define God? Who can define God in man? Who can define, explain, and understand with the mere limited intelligence of a finite mind the unseen mysteries of God, and how He can and

does, through material bread and wine, give Himself to us? Is it not rather absurd to try? And have not the attempts of man to explain and define invariably led, not to that for which Jesus gave us the Blessed Sacrament of His most precious body and blood, but to exactly the opposite result—not to unity and fellowship, but to division and discord?

What did our Lord say to His disciples on that last night? He said, "*Do this.*" He did not say, "Argue about it," or, "Don't do it until you have found out exactly the why and wherefore of it," but just "*Do it*"; and they did it, and Christian people have done it ever since, and "in the breaking of bread" they have, like the two disciples at Emmaus, come to know Jesus. Do this, and in doing it believe—act on the assumption that our Lord can be trusted never to tell you to do anything that is not worth doing, or will not effect what He means it to effect, if you do your part. And after all, profound as the mystery is, it is not the only mystery in life. What of life itself? How is physical life sustained day by day? Who can tell you how the life-force in the food you eat becomes very part of your own flesh, blood, and bone? Though we cannot explain how, yet we know that it does so, and we know it by the only way we can ever know it—not by arguing about it, but by the facts of experience.

But for whom is the Holy Communion? In the Acts of the Apostles we read that the practice of those first Christians was to meet together on

the first day of the week—the weekly festival of the Resurrection of our Lord—for the “breaking of bread,” the Holy Communion. As it was the only corporate Act of Worship instituted by our Lord they very naturally made this service *the* service of the whole fellowship. There is no hint in the whole of the New Testament that the practice of partaking of the Holy Communion on every Lord’s Day was looked upon as anything but the normal and ordinary thing for every Christian to do.

St Paul, it is true, lays great stress on the necessity for due preparation, but the only test of “worthiness” to receive that I have ever been able to discover is that of being a good tryer. Deep down in your heart you must be honestly trying to live the life you know you ought to live, and therefore be wanting the strength our Lord offers in the Blessed Sacrament. But the test is not “success” in your endeavour; for the Holy Communion is not a reward for the virtuous, but a strength for the weak, for our Lord came not to call the righteous—or people who thought they were all right—but sinners, people who knew they were no better than they ought to be, but were honestly trying.

I have never yet been able to see why young and old, if they are really trying—and it is only continual practice that will make you a better tryer—should not follow the example of the first Christians, and receive the Holy Communion every Lord’s Day. After all, we do not live either by the month or by the quarter; the rule

of our life is "day by day," and the rule of our corporate life is week by week, six days' work and one day's rest, and that one day's rest or freedom from the ordinary business of life gives us the opportunity, week by week, of joining our brethren in the fellowship of worship. However good and helpful other forms of worship may be, the Holy Communion is the Lord's own service; in the truest sense therefore *the* divine service, God-made, not man-made.

Whatever our practice in this matter, the obligation still holds to take our part in public worship, or, as we call it, divine service—that is to say, "service to God." A duty—something we owe to God, to the fellowship, to our fellow-men, and to ourselves. Our duty to God because He told us to "do it"; our duty to Him because by so doing we proclaim and bear witness to our faith in Him, and to our belief that "man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"—the proclaiming before men that life, apart from the worship of God, spells ultimate death. And this witness we owe to our fellow-men—to the young as well as to the old—especially to those who "care for none of these things." "Church-going is not everything—what really matters is living a good life"; we have dealt with this before in the form of "It doesn't matter what a man believes"; the truth is, that if the public worship of God were abandoned England would soon revert to paganism.

But the carrying on of public worship depends

upon the laity, not merely upon the clergy. To take our part in public worship is a duty, then, to our fellow-men, as it is to the fellowship to which we belong. All of us know well enough that public worship, praise, intercession, and prayer are far more real to us in a full church than in a church which is nearly empty. When a man looks on public worship as a duty he will give up talking about going to church not doing him any good, because the parson can't preach, or the choir can't sing, or the seats are uncomfortable, for he will understand that to go to church merely to see what you can get out of it for yourself is to go from a motive the very reverse of the right one. We should go not primarily to get, but to give, to give thanks and praise and worship to God, to give our witness to our fellow-men, to give our company to the members of the fellowship, and so rightly we call it "*Divine Service*." Of course nobody will ever get any good out of going to church if he goes with the object of getting, but if he goes to give he will get full measure and running over in return, for so God always treats us.

Finally, public worship is a duty to ourselves. The Holy Communion—as indeed all public worship—is the antidote to selfishness in our religion, and it is quite possible to be as individualistic and selfish in religion as in anything else. The ultimate problem in life, as we have already seen, is, "How to live together." We believe worship must precede work, as "being" must precede "doing," and right thinking precede right acting. It is in taking our

part, at whatever personal cost to ourselves, in learning to worship together that we can best train ourselves to learn to live together in the fellowship of the Church, and it is in corporate worship and prayer that we realize ourselves most as members of the body, and are thereby helped to make our individual contribution to the welfare of the whole.

CHAPTER XIV

LIFE AS SERVICE IN FELLOWSHIP

“THIS is eternal life”—here and now—“to know Thee the one true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent”: an ever-increasing knowledge of God as He has made Himself known to us men in Jesus—perfect God and perfect Man—is the secret of the Christian character. That character is the response in life to the love of God for us. “We love Him because He first loved us.” Love is self-giving in service, and that response of love to love is sure and certain when God’s appeal of love in Christ at last gets home, and touches that divine something in each one of us, which can no more help responding to the best than gunpowder can help exploding when in contact with a spark. This has so far been our theme, and the issue of it all is a certain way of life, Christ’s way, the only way, the way of the Cross, the way of the “I” crossed out. For that is how the Cross is made: the form of it is an “I” crossed out, and that to me is the shortest and most complete account of what the Christian way of living really means. “Whosoever will be My disciple let him deny himself”—say “No” to self, cross self out—daily, and take up his cross—his “I” crossed out—“and follow Me.” It is the

way of love, of self-giving in service to God and man. First love God, and then you will be able to love your neighbour, not otherwise.

Now this life of self-giving is a life in fellowship, and therefore must also be a life of self-development. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart (affections, desires), and all thy mind (thought-life), with all thy soul (will), and with all thy strength (body)—with "all," and not merely with a part; our offering to God must be as complete as we can make it. In order to make our fullest contribution to the welfare of the whole body we must make the best of ourselves in body, mind, and character. Herein lies the true motive and incentive for all self-development—not that we may have for ourselves, but that we may have in order that we may give to others.

For the Christian, then, the due care of his physical health, and the control of his natural appetites and passions, is a duty; for a clean life is a healthy life. There is no such thing as solitary vice—all vice, all sin, all lack of self-control in thought, word, or deed has not only a correspondingly bad effect on the mind and body of the person himself, but reacts on others: an enfeebled body or mind not only introduces positive poison into the body corporate, but prevents a man from making his fullest contribution to the health and welfare of the whole. This conviction makes the effort of self-control worth while.

And the Christian must develop his mind. The mental capacity, like the physical capacity of individuals, varies; it is not given to all to be

learned scientists or profound theologians; some have a 100 per cent., others only a 5 per cent. mind; what God demands of the man with the 5 per cent. as of the man with the 100 per cent. mind, is that both should offer Him 100 per cent. of the mind with which they are endowed. The man who will not take the trouble to develop his mind by study and thought, cannot know God with an ever-increasing knowledge. The development of the mind is a duty owed to God and man, in order that he may have his best self to give in service.

All human problems, as we have already stated, can be reduced ultimately to one—"how to live together." The Christian life, therefore, is all through a life in fellowship. We shall understand this the better if we will remember that with God there is no such thing as "mass production." This is as true in Nature as in man. No two blades of grass are identically the same, and certainly no two human beings have ever been found to be absolutely alike; every one of us, in a real sense, is unique; and yet God's plan is that there should be unity in this diversity—unity, not uniformity. It is this unity in diversity which the Catholic Church is to demonstrate to the world.

There are four things which make unity in fellowship impossible. First, selfishness, or mere individualism: fellowship is only possible on the basis of mutual service, when each member makes his special contribution of heart and mind and will to the welfare of the whole. Secondly, jealousy: but when we understand that each one of us is

unique, and has his own special niche in the body to fill, which nobody else can possibly fill, the chief cause for jealousy disappears. God's purpose for each one of us is that we should be ourselves, not somebody else. Thirdly, competition, in the sense of knocking out somebody else. There is a place for competition as we saw when we were thinking of the world as a home, and the human race as one large family, but it is the kind of competition we saw in the war, competition primarily not with others but with ourselves—competition to be our best. There is no place for any other kind of competition, because the welfare of every other member of the body must be of as vital importance to ourselves as it is to them; as the man truly said, "If we don't hang together we shall hang separately!" The fourth thing which makes fellowship impossible is the idea that any one of us has a monopoly of the truth, and the consequent refusal to recognize that truth is something infinitely greater than any one individual or any group of individuals can possibly comprehend. No two people see exactly in the same way, for no two pairs of eyes are ever identical, nor are any two minds. It is not that what we see and the way we see it, physically or mentally, is necessarily wrong, but it certainly does not represent the whole. Just as the body can only be fully alive when every member is fully alive, or can only do its full work when every member is contributing his full share, so in the sphere of truth. The divisions in the Body of Christ, meant by God to be one, are, I believe, due to these four causes—selfishness,

jealousy, a wrong kind of competition, and a lack of appreciation of the point of view of others. It is obviously the duty of every Christian worthy of the name, not only to do his best not to increase division in the Church of Christ, but actively to pray and work for the reunion of Christendom.

The present divisions in the Christian Church are of long standing, and have their roots far back in history ; therefore we shall be on our guard against any hasty or superficial scheme of reunion, however attractive and plausible it may appear ; and there are a good many suggested. One substance that I know of which quite easily unites is putty, but it disunites quite as easily, and putty is a backboneless sort of stuff. The reunion of Christendom, if ever achieved, will only last if it is built up on the sure foundation of conviction—the conviction, first, that unity is God's will and purpose for the fellowship of His Body the Church, and that therefore it is possible ; the conviction that such unity is only possible when the members of the body are each animated by the one Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of love ; and the conviction that truth is something which completely transcends the capacity of any one member, or group of members, of the body to grasp. It may sound paradoxical, but for my part I believe it is true that the most valuable contribution which any of us can make is absolute loyalty to that particular fellowship to which we belong. As I once heard an Anglican say, " I would rather have a hard-boiled Baptist than a half-baked Anglican." I believe he was right. I have very

little trust in a man who is not loyal to his own home and family, or to his college or country, simply because he lacks the one thing which will enable him to appreciate loyalty in others. It is the man who himself knows what loyalty means, and practises it, that can be trusted to treat others with due respect and charity.

Disastrous as are the divisions in the Christian Church to-day, they would be still worse if it were believed (as it is by some) that anyone could be a Christian without belonging to some fellowship of believers. Therefore I would say, do nothing in the cause of reunion which will tend to weaken the sense of loyalty in the individual to that Christian fellowship to which he happens to belong, for in so doing you will not only be weakening in him a Christian virtue, but will also be suggesting that these divisions in the Christian Church do not really matter. Either they are based on principles which their members believe to be vital, or they are not. If they are not, then there is no sort of justification for their continuance. If they are, then the only sure way to reunion is for all denominations patiently to work away together to examine their principles in order to see how far they are mutually exclusive, and to find out whether it is not possible, while allowing a great variety of expression of faith in worship, and even of actual organization, without surrendering any vital principle, to unite on a basis of real and lasting principle both in faith and order.

Honest disagreement with another man, even on questions touching the Christian faith, is no

reason for not being charitable towards him, or for not fully appreciating the worth of his character and work. I believe the more loyal a man is to his own fellowship, and the stronger and deeper his convictions are, the better he should be able to honour and appreciate those who honestly differ from him.

Loyalty to your own fellowship involves not only pride of membership, but also taking pains to make yourself acquainted with its customs, its rules and regulations, and its organization, in order that you may take your full share in its life and work; and there is great need for more loyalty of this kind. Anyone who wishes to teach others the Christian faith should know enough to stimulate this loyalty by making clear to them the ordinary duties of membership. As it is we have certainly in the Church of England (and, I expect, in other Communion as well) far too many "passengers" who expect other people to pull them along, while they occupy themselves in the pastime of criticizing the people who are doing the work!

The life of service for the Christian will be shown first within the fellowship of the Body of Christ, but this way of life will be applied to every relationship between himself and others.

From the Christian standpoint all forms of work and industry by which men and women, as we say, "make their living," are forms of service to the community. We should therefore do our work in that spirit; not only to make a living for ourselves but also that others may, through our service, live fuller and happier lives. The pre-

dominating motive should not be personal profit but the public good. Of course when we say this we immediately find people who tell us that it will not work, for they maintain that it is the incentive of private and personal profit which alone makes men work their best. Those of us who lived through those four years of the Great War, at all events, saw just ordinary men and women, of all sections of Society, in their thousands giving the lie direct to this estimate of human character even as we know it to-day. If in war, why not in peace? Why not? provided that a moral equivalent of war can be found which will so stir men's emotions, so quicken their consciences, and so fire their wills that, under the compelling power of a great ideal, they will forget themselves in their service to their fellow-men. That moral equivalent we Christians believe is supplied by the faith of Christ. This is exactly what it has done, and is still doing to-day, for quite ordinary people in every nation on God's earth, who have really given themselves up to Christ, holding nothing back.

Finally, this way of life will manifest itself in our relation to our fellow-citizens and to those of other countries. The Christian citizen will not look to the State to see how much he can get out of it for himself, but rather to see how much he can contribute to its fullest welfare. He will recognize not only the duty of using the vote which is his, but of making himself acquainted, so far as he can, with the real needs of his country, not least of those less fortunate than himself. He

will pay his rates and taxes, if not with pleasure, at least in full. The Christian will, in the truest sense, be a patriot ; he will love his country and be proud of it ; he will do his best to see that it shall make the fullest use of the gifts God has given it, material, intellectual, or spiritual ; and this, not for its own aggrandizement, or for the purpose of dominating other countries and races, but for service, in order that his own country and people may make their fullest contribution to the welfare of the whole human race, and not least to the weaker peoples and the child races of the world.

The Christian should be prompt to support every movement for settling both industrial and international disputes, not on a basis of force, whether the force be that of a "lock-out" or a "strike," or a war, but of goodwill, common sense, and arbitration. He will not be heard talking, for instance, of the work of the League of Nations in a superior, carping fashion ; he will throw himself into the work—join the League of Nations Union, and do his best to see that the rising generation in his own town or village shall grow up not only with a hatred of war, but with a real will to peace, not merely because war is horrible and futile, but because peace is every bit as much God's will for the world as it is for the home.

But the Christian's efforts for peace will not stop here. He will actively take his part as a member of the fellowship of Christ's Church in the extension of the Kingdom of Christ, the Prince of Peace, at home and overseas. He will be him-

self a missionary of the good news to others, near and far, of the only way of living according to God's plan ; he will be so, just in proportion as his own religion means to him a new conception of life, and a new power with which to live it.

CHAPTER XV

PASSING IT ON

THE only true test of the reality of our own faith is the measure of our desire to pass it on to others. This can only be done by the translation of that faith into our everyday lives, by our witness to that faith before men, by the sacrifices we are prepared to make for it, and by training ourselves to give "a reasonable account of the hope that is in us." If we believe Christ's way of life to be the only way, then we shall be eager that others should at least have the chance of learning what that way is. We shall give our energetic personal support to the fellowship in its endeavour to spread the truth, first, by our prayers; secondly, by our alms; and, thirdly, by our active work—whether God may need us in the ministry of the Church or in any other calling in life, here at home or in some distant part of the battle-front overseas.

First, by our prayers. How can anyone take the words of the Lord's Prayer on his lips day by day, and pray, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven," and then say that he does not believe in Christian missions? The Lord's Prayer is throughout a missionary prayer; but to pray it intelligently we must take

the trouble to learn what is being done by the fellowship to spread His Kingdom, and where fresh reinforcements of spiritual and material resources are needed. This demands intelligent study and definite work. To-day there is no excuse for anyone to be ignorant of these things, for missionary literature is as varied as it is admirable.

First, then, prayer—definite, regular, systematic; for all the man-power and material means that can be supplied will be useless unless behind it is the due supply of the only munitions which are of any avail—the limitless resources of the Spirit of God. This it is our special business to supply. And just in proportion as we are honestly trying to supply these fresh reinforcements of spiritual power to our representatives at home or in distant lands, we shall find that our efforts for them react upon ourselves. For if we pray for Christian missions we shall find that our own enthusiasm for the cause will proportionately increase. It is always so.

Secondly, by almsgiving. Missionaries have bodies to be fed and clothed and housed, and transport to foreign lands must be paid for. Nor does this exhaust the expense of missionary enterprise. Money is needed, too, for the work at home. God never asks us to do the impossible, but He does demand that we shall do our utmost. Any man, therefore, who takes his religion seriously will take this question of money seriously. He will not leave to chance the amount of his contribution to the work of the fellowship. He will budget for this as any sensible man will for his rent and household expenses. He will decide what

proportion of his income (or pocket money) he should set aside definitely for God's work in His Church. The proportion will, of course, vary according to his income and the extent of his personal obligations. For instance, the proportion that a bachelor with no dependents could give would be greater than that which a married man with a family could rightly afford. Having settled the proportion he will set it aside and treat it as trust money for God.

Now, on what principle should he divide the amount? The best plan I know is this. The sum so set aside directly for the Church should be divided into two portions; the first should be spent on paying our personal share of the cost of what we *get* for ourselves; the second should be *given* in order that others may get.

1. "Payment for what we get"—that is to say, the maintenance of the society of which we are members and in whose privileges we share. For a member of the Church of England this would include the payment of a parish priest, the cost of building or maintaining a church in which to worship, and the cost of maintaining the public services, commonly known as Church Expenses. It would also include the cost of providing the necessary diocesan organization, with the bishop of the diocese and his headquarters staff. Further, the indispensable Central Organization of the Church of England as a whole, with the Church Assembly and Convocations, has to be maintained. This, too, will be a charge under our first heading. Our contributions towards these objects in parish,

diocese, or Church as a whole, cannot rightly be considered as "giving": they are "dues" or "payments" for what we ourselves receive or share in. We should not consider them any more as "charity" than we should look on a subscription to a club or the payment of our butcher's bills, or the wages of a servant, as "charity." Further, if through the endowments of past benefactors our parish priest has been provided with a stipend (generally entirely inadequate), or a parish church has been built for us to worship in, or provision has been made for the bishop of the diocese, we should not therefore feel relieved of our own obligation to pay our share of the cost of these necessities for the maintenance of the work of the Church. The benefactions of the past set free the money that we should otherwise have to provide if there were no endowments; with the money thus set free we can help other members of the fellowship less fortunate than ourselves, at home or overseas. Endowments were never meant to pauperize future generations.

2. "Giving that others may get." Under this head would come, first, the extension of Christ's Church at home and overseas, *i.e.*, all missionary work; and, secondly, all such works of mercy as those mentioned by our Lord in St Matthew xxv. 35 *ff.*—feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, tending the sick, helping the prisoner and the "down and out." No one can read those poignant words of our Lord without realizing that such works of mercy are a definite obligation on all who call themselves His disciples.

A scheme such as I have outlined is at least businesslike, reasonable, and based on principle. If it were adopted by the communicant members of the Church of England and definitely taught to the rising generation, there is little doubt that within twenty years Church finance would be put on an entirely new footing, and the work of God would cease to be as miserably starved as it is to-day. Money, like all God's gifts, is a solemn trust committed to us, not for self but for service.

The Kingdom of God, then, will only be extended throughout the world by prayer, by almsgiving, and, last but not least, by personal service and personal witness. If the whole human race is, as we believe, one organic whole; if the Church is the Body of Christ, one divine, living organism, then every human being and every member of the Body of Christ has his own special function in the body: each one of us is created by God for some special purpose, called by Him to some special work.

This is what we call "vocation." Usually that term is only applied to one particular function in the Body of Christ, that of the regular ministry—an absurd limitation. God must have His special purpose for every member of the body. It is our business to try to find out what that purpose is, and then to fulfil it. How is this to be done? First, we must be ready to do anything and go anywhere if God calls. We must be ready to put ourselves entirely in His hands for His service. We must use the intelligence God has given us. We shall think where the need is greatest. We shall take into consideration any special gifts with which God

has endowed us. We shall be guided not only by our own desires, though these will be real indications of God's guiding hand, but also by the circumstances of our life and upbringing. Above all, we shall definitely seek for God's guidance by asking Him to make His will clear to us, being confident that He will do so if we are ready to go anywhere and do anything.

We shall look upon any work to which He may call us as an opportunity given to us, not only for rendering service to Him and to our fellow-men and thereby making life fuller and richer for them, but for bearing witness to our faith in Him. And so we shall pass on to others, through the contacts given by our everyday life and work, God's plan of life as made known to us through Christ Jesus.

How is this to be done? In the same way as our Lord did it. First and foremost He demonstrated God's plan by living His whole life on that plan. He lived out in His everyday life the principles which He believed govern all human life, of fellowship, service, and dependence upon God. Secondly, He bore witness before men to the faith that was in Him; to those ideas of God and man and their relation one to the other from which issued those principles on which He based His life. In our Lord men came to see that creed made character. So it must be with us. You cannot catch measles from anyone who has not got them! You certainly cannot catch religion from anyone who is not seriously trying to live his life according to his faith.

“Seriously trying.” That is what really matters,

for the Christian life is not a question of "feelings" but of "will"—the will to do or have a good try at doing "whatsoever He saith" unto us. To take our Lord as "The Way"—our example—to take Him as the one and only standard by which to judge our own lives. What would He think, say, or do? Could we see Him thinking those thoughts which we have been thinking? or saying those things which we have been saying? or doing what we have been doing or are inclined to do? If not, then cut them out. Be prepared to act on the assumption that His ideas of God and man are true, and try to live your life on that basis. Act on the assumption that Jesus of Nazareth was and is what He claimed to be, and what His followers down the ages have believed Him to be, not only perfect Man but perfect God—the Revelation of the Godhead in human life.

Depend upon Him as the source and support of all life, through prayer and sacrament. Don't worry about your feelings; if we never did anything unless we felt like it, we should lose our job in a week! Don't wait until you understand all about it; our Lord said, "Watch and pray," and "Do this." So do it and go on and stick to it, and when you have made a mess of it all and feel that the effort is hopeless and futile, remember it is just for people like you our Lord became Man, to heal, restore, forgive, and remake. Own up to your sins and failures, ask Him to forgive you and help you to start afresh.

It was only by daily persistent personal contact with our Lord through the Holy Spirit that the

disciples succeeded in demonstrating to the world Christ's faith, and the life which issues from it. If we are ever to win others to Christ it can only be by the same devotion to His Person. First, by the witness of our daily lives—by being good tryers; secondly, by outspoken witness to the faith (or belief) which we profess.

How are we to do this? First and foremost we shall constantly bear in mind what we have already referred to in connection with our Lord's method of treating other people. He had an amazing disregard for mere numbers, and He never tried to force anyone to believe what He said was true, or to do what He said was right. At the same time He never left anyone in any doubt as to what He Himself believed to be true and right. So it must be with us. We all have constant opportunities in our ordinary intercourse with others of never leaving them in any sort of doubt as to what we believe is true and right. Just in proportion as we are really convinced ourselves, so shall we take the opportunities, which naturally offer themselves, for bearing our witness to our convictions. Others may not (and probably will not) agree with us: that does not matter. What does matter is that we should leave them in no doubt as to what we believe.

Again and again, as a matter of fact, we keep silence when we ought to speak, partly because we are afraid of appearing to others to be better people than we know we are, and partly because we are afraid of boring people. Neither reason is really a good one. If we honestly believe a certain ideal is right, however short we may ourselves

come of that ideal, the honest thing is to witness to our conviction, and face being told the truth, that our practice does not tally with our belief. Our failure does not invalidate the truth. We shall not bore people by letting them know what we believe so long as we make it clear to them that it is a free country and they can believe what they like! We only bore people when we give them the impression that we are trying to force our ideas down their throats.

It is just this witnessing to the truth, as we see it, that in the long run helps others to believe. Every time we do so we are, as a fact, suggesting right ideas and thoughts to them, and one of these days some of them may accept these suggestions and act on them. Why do commercial firms spend thousands of pounds annually in advertising their goods? Simply because they know by experience that if they do so, and go on doing so, more people will come to believe that their goods are worth buying, and will eventually buy them. Advertising is based on a sound psychological principle: the principle of suggestion. And remember this, that the wrong ideas of life are constantly being suggested to men, women and children in every sort of conceivable way. Anyone who knows anything about life, and especially about boys and girls, knows this is true, and will, if he is wise, take every opportunity of counteracting these wrong ideas by suggesting right ones.

Besides, the best way of combating wrong ideas is not so much by arguing with those who hold them as by the positive affirmation of true ideas.

I know well enough how easy it is to make excuses, on the ground of the Englishman's natural reserve, for not speaking before others of our own religious and moral convictions ; but I do not find that this natural reserve prevents Englishmen from expressing their opinions on any other subject in which they are really interested. Who is there who has found that a certain remedy has, for instance, cured his lumbago who will not pass on the cure to somebody else who is suffering from the same complaint ?

The fact is, that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." If a man has really taken the trouble to study the faith which he professes, and to think it out for himself so that he can give a reasonable account of it ; if, by so doing, that faith becomes real to himself so that he makes an honest effort to live by it ; if he has had any personal experience of the power which comes through prayer and sacrament, he will find himself quite naturally speaking about it. He will want to pass it on to others, for he will realize that he has got hold of something which has made, and is making, all the difference to his whole life and outlook, and will want to share it with others and not to keep it to himself.

Thus and thus only will men come to believe that the one secret of all true life and the one solution of all life's problems lies in obedience to God's plan as made known to us by our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Who is sufficient for these things ?" Who indeed ? But all God asks of any of us is to go

for the highest and best that is in us—and that is always Christ, “the Light that lighteth every man coming into the world”—not to be ashamed to confess Him before men, to be good “tryers,” to do what He tells us, and leave the rest to Him. If we do so He will see us through, and we shall find, as the years go by, that the greatest and most thrilling adventure in life is trying to live it according to God’s plan.

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God's plan

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